

THE HEROIC SPIRIT
IN THE LITERATURE OF THE GREAT WAR

by

KATHLEEN M McARTHUR

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ARTS
IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

1989

The University of Cape Town has been given
the right to reproduce this thesis in whole
or in part. Copyright is held by the author.

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	1
1. <u>Introduction</u>	
A Survey of the Heroic tradition in English Literature.	1
2. <u>Isaac Rosenberg: Part One</u>	
The Development of an Heroic Vision	56
3. <u>Isaac Rosenberg: Part Two</u>	
Husbanding the Ancient Glory in an Unheroic War	85
4. <u>David Jones: Part One</u>	
Early Works	135
5. <u>David Jones: Part Two</u>	
'In Parenthesis'	151
6. <u>David Jones: Part Three</u>	
The Passchendaele Fragment	199
7. <u>Frederic Manning: Part One</u>	
Early Works	220
8. <u>Frederic Manning: Part Two</u>	
'The Middle Parts of Fortune'	260
<u>Appendix</u>	294
<u>Bibliography</u>	295

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Inevitably, after a study which has its origins as far back as a childhood interest in my grandfather, who was killed in the First World War, one accumulates a debt of gratitude, inspirational, academic, and material. I should like now to thank all the patient people who have borne with me and my obsession for many years, as well as the Library Staff of the Universities of Cape Town, Stanford, Oxford, the National Library of Wales, and the Imperial War Museum, London, who gave me help which was usually much beyond the bounds of their duty.

But, in particular, for special thanks I wish to mention two persons: Ian McArthur, who in 1972 began my academic pursuit of the Great War with a Christmas gift of Wilfred Owen's poems and who has since nurtured my interest through a Master's dissertation and through the present one, with the finding and buying of well over a hundred books, listening to the reading of many paragraphs of my work and pronouncing on their clarity, and, finally, typing (on an AMSTRAD PCW8256 Word Processor) and proof-reading the whole dissertation; and Terry Boxall, my supervisor and teacher *par excellence*, who has the rare gift of perfect courtesy, combining an insistence on firm critical standards with kindness, guidance and tact.

Of other generous friends mention must also be made of Carol Ayton who, despite the birth of Caroline, took over with enthusiasm and complete dedication the critical role of Ian when he was away; and of Penny Ratcliff and of Sister Rosemary Cummins (O.P.), my 'resident theologian', who allowed me to discuss my ideas with them in the midst of a hectic school day.

Lastly, I wish to acknowledge the inspiration of Professor Andrew Rutherford of Goldsmiths' College, University of London, whose book The Literature of War: Five Studies in Heroic Virtue helped greatly to sustain my belief that the need to celebrate heroism was as integral to writers of the Great War as was the need to register their protest.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

"The poetry is in the pity" wrote Wilfred Owen in 1918 in a preface intended for a collection of his war poems. The notion that the poetry of the First World War is primarily a poetry of pity and angry protest has become so embedded in the general literary consciousness that, even today, after one has performed a thorough scrutiny of the criticism of the literature of the period, one finds that it is seldom realized that there were other valid and truthful responses to that conflict.

In the light of a full knowledge of the Great War, one can support those who, both at the time and more recently, have rejected all attempts to glorify it. For however many people Rupert Brooke, for instance, might still stand as a symbol of the vivid and beautiful doomed youth of 1914, his view of war as a game and as a welcome opportunity to test one's manhood is too naive to be tenable. Yet this justifiable rejection of all poetry that falsifies the picture of war on the Western Front from 1914 to 1918 has led to a tendency to judge all war writings by their pacifist force. Thus it is that much of the unique quality and inspirational power of the poetry and prose that emanated from the Great War has been missed or ignored. In particular, Isaac Rosenberg's war poetry has suffered by its having been read as poetry concerned with issues that were crucial to Wilfred Owen, while, in fact, it has nothing of the social, messianic spirit that informs Owen's poetry. Rosenberg was inspired by a heroic, tragic vision, in which the war was an unloosing of huge, devastating forces, and against these, futilely but splendidly, stood man. Impelled by much the same vision as Rosenberg was Frederic Manning, who wrote poems of considerable merit during the war, but who went on after the war to synthesize his

apprehension of the heroism and the bleakness of the war in The Middle Parts of Fortune. This work is, undoubtedly, the tragic novel of the war, and its superior quality was recognized by Arnold Bennett when it was first published in 1930. Yet, despite this early acclaim and despite too its staying in print, it is little known. This is almost certainly because it is not so much an indictment of the war as an examination, from a tragic and heroic viewpoint, of the human predicament in war. David Jones found the shaping force of his epic poem of the First World War, In Parenthesis, in his literary past, particularly his heroic literary past. But it seems that so strong in the minds of modern critics is the association of the word 'heroic' with the propaganda and hackneyed martial effusions written at the beginning of the war, that they have shied away from pointing out that the continuation of the heroic tradition of the past is the focus of Jones's vision. In Parenthesis is such a rich and comprehensive work that it is perfectly possible to concentrate on aspects of it other than the heroic, but in doing so one misses the direction in which Jones points us at the beginning of the Preface. He describes the fellowship of the Royal Welch Fusiliers whose experiences are the subject of the book as "the intimate, continuing, domestic life of small contingents of men, within whose structure Roland could find, and, for a reasonable while, enjoy, his Oliver." That he draws such a parallel between the relationship of the heroes of the Chanson de Roland and the infantrymen he knew indicates how integral a part the heroic tradition is of Jones's view of war. Rosenberg and Manning, too, reveal many of the myriad faces of war, but to point only to the diversity of their of their work is, as in the case of David Jones, to obscure what lies at its epicentre.

The aversion to the heroic found in modern criticism of the literature of war has led, also, to the obscuring of the important fact that the effects which the pre-war heroic conditioning had on the sensibility of

the entire wartime generation of writers were permanent and profound. Even among poets whose motivating force came from the necessity they perceived to articulate the horrors of war, the response to war is not as clear-cut as is commonly presented, and one finds throughout their writing a need to adhere to images and values which are essentially heroic:

I, too, saw God through mud,-
 The mud that cracked on cheeks when wretches smiled.
 War brought more glory to their eyes than blood,
 And gave their laughs more glee than shakes a child.
 (1)

So writes Wilfred Owen in 'Apologia Pro Poemate Meo', a poem which is as pure an exposition of heroic virtue as has ever been written, celebrating, as it does, the bond of brotherhood and the exhilaration of battle central to much heroic poetry, most memorably 'The Battle of Maldon'. 'Spring Offensive' is, validly, read as Nature's indictment of man's warring activities, but what has hitherto gone unremarked is the vital complexity of Owen's response that lies in his being able to perceive a heroic splendour in man's defiance of Nature in the midst of this indictment. As the following lines indicate, this omission is hard to understand, for the character of the men's heroism is carefully distinguished, and the image of them seeming, for a brief, magnificent instant, mightier than the sun is the most arresting in the whole poem, adding enormously to its resonance and to the tragic intensity of its vision.

... No alarms
 Of bugles, no high flags, no clamorous haste -
 Only a lift and flare of eyes that faced
 The sun, like a friend with whom their love is done.
 O larger shone that smile against the sun, -
 Mightier than his whose bounty these have spurned.
 (2)

(1) Wilfred Owen : The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen
 ed. C Day Lewis (Chatto & Windus, London 1971) p.39

(2) op.cit. p.52

Of all the war poets, Siegfried Sassoon would seem to be the quintessential 'poet of protest', and his poems written of his experience of trench warfare are presented by his commentators as registering an unambiguous response of anger and bitterness. Yet those who knew him well both as a soldier and a poet, as Robert Graves and Vivian de Sola Pinto did, were surprised and intrigued by the discrepancy between two aspects of Sassoon: the first was the officer whom the men called 'Mad Jack' due to his fearlessness in battle and his daring, private forays into no-man's-land to avenge friends who had been killed; the second the agonized poet who railed against the inhumanity and futility of war, and against the civilians and Staff Officers, who he believed were prolonging the war. Graves, who served in the same regiment, points with characteristic directness to this interesting inconsistency in his friend:

... when I was in France I was never such a fire-eater as he was. The amount of Germans that I had killed or caused to be killed was negligible compared with his wholesale slaughter. The fact was that the direction of Siegfried's unconquerable idealism changed with his environment; he varied between happy warrior and bitter pacifist.

(3)

De Sola Pinto, who was a subaltern in Sassoon's company, found the two conflicting roles, played with equal fervour by his commanding officer, hard to reconcile:

I found it a curious paradox [he writes] that the author of Counter Attack, which had just been published, that volume full of bitter indignation at the cruelty of modern warfare, should also be a first-rate soldier and a most aggressive company commander. He was determined that A Company should demonstrate its superiority to the enemy as soon as possible, and spent a large part of his nocturnal watches crawling through the deep corn in no-man's land with a couple of bombs in his pocket and a knobkerrie in his hand.

(4)

(3) Robert Graves : Goodbye to All That: An Autobiography
(Jonathan Cape, London 1929) p.339

(4) Vivian de Sola Pinto : 'My First War: Memoirs of a Spectacled Subaltern'
in Promise of Greatness: The War of 1914-1918 (London 1968) pp.80-1

These passages surely should alert the reader to the possibility of Sassoon's response to the war being less one-sided than it is usually seen to be, but what follows is a fairly typical example of the way in which material which disturbs the established ideas about the trench poets is put aside; Jon Silkin, after quoting the same passage from Goodbye to All That, comments:

This is perceptive but also perhaps unfair, in that the phrase 'changed direction' implies a continuous oscillation in both life and poetry, whereas I understand only the one change - from a Brooke-like idealism to angry satire.

(5)

Such a determinedly fixed view of a writer's response, despite contemporary evidence to the contrary, has obvious dangers; not so obvious perhaps in Silkin's overall assessment of Sassoon's war poems, since they are dominated by anger and bitterness, but glimpsed, for instance, in his ignoring the significance of the last line of 'To Any Dead Officer': "I wish they'd killed you in a decent show." (6) (*) Coming, as it does, as the conclusion to one of Sassoon's most bitter war poems, in which he exposes the cruelty of war and the appalling callousness of the attitude which civilians and Staff Officers had to the troops, Sassoon's concern with the nature of the attack in which this representative soldier-victim died is very striking. Sassoon, who normally was careful to suppress in his war poems all evidence of the 'warrior' side of his own personality, has here revealed a crucial distinction between himself and the true pacifist, who would feel that it mattered little whether a man died in "a decent show" - an attack which gave him some chance of achieving its military objectives -

(5) Jon Silkin : Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War
(OUP, London 1972) p.137

(6) Siegfried Sassoon : Collected Poems 1908-1956
(Faber and Faber, London 1961) p.85

(*) I am indebted to Andrew Rutherford for this particular insight into Sassoon's war poetry. See The Literature of War: Five Studies in Heroic Virtue (Macmillan, London 1978) p.67

or whether he was wasted in "a hopeless dud attack", knocked over by machine-gun fire the moment he left the trench. Sassoon's use of "decent show" is an indication to the reader that his sensibility was too firmly rooted in the heroic conventions of his pre-war and early war years to be wholly changed by the experience of trench warfare, and this is borne out by the way in which he depicts, in two of his later poems, the men whom he led. In 'Prelude: The Troops', the opening poem of the collection that established him as the polemical poet of the war, his expression is strongly affected by traditional heroic representations of the soldier:

O my brave brown companions, when your souls
 Flock silently away, and the eyeless dead
 Shame the wild beast of battle on the ridge,
 Death will stand grieving in that field of war
 Since your unvanquished hardihood is spent.
 And through some mooned Valhalla there will pass
 Battalions and battalions, scarred from hell;
 The unreturning army that was youth;
 The legions who have suffered and are dust.
 (7)

Similarly, in 'Banishment', he conveys his admiration for their courage and endurance in this manner:

I am banished from the patient men who fight
 They smote my heart to pity, built my pride.
 Shoulder to aching shoulder, side by side,
 They trudged away from life's broad wealds of light.
 Their wrongs were mine; and ever in my sight
 They went arrayed in honour. ...
 (8)

It is interesting that, in these poems, without any irony intended at all, Sassoon pays tribute to the men in the very language and imagery which he utilizes in his satirical poems to point up the hollowness and inappropriateness of heroic cant. Such an employment of romantic,

(7) Siegfried Sassoon : Counter-Attack and Other Poems in
Collected Poems 1908-1956 (Faber and Faber, London 1961) p.67

(8) *ibid.* p.86

heroic language is illustrated in 'How to Die', a poem that, somewhat disconcertingly, appears in the same collection as 'The Troops' and 'Banishment':

Dark clouds are smouldering into red
 While down the craters morning burns.
 The dying soldier shifts his head
 To watch the glory that returns;
 He lifts his fingers toward the skies
 Where holy brightness breaks in flame;
 Radiance reflected in his eyes,
 And on his lips a whispered name.

You'd think, to hear some people talk,
 That lads go West with sobs and curses,
 And sullen faces white as chalk,
 Hankering for wreaths and tombs and hearses.
 But they've been taught the way to do it
 Like Christian soldiers; not with haste
 And shuddering groans; but passing through it
 With due regard for decent taste.

(9)

A similar duality is noticeable in the war poems and letters of Charles Hamilton Sorley, the poet who has the distinction of being one of the first to realize the inadequacy and lack of truth in Rupert Brooke's famous 'soldier sonnets'. With his cool sceptical intelligence, and love of Germany, which he had visited before the war, it is not surprising that Sorley should not have been swept up in the general patriotic fervour, and that he should express in his poems and letters a view of war that is the very reverse of Brooke's. In his sonnet on those who have been killed, he bleakly and deliberately strips death in war of all the romantic and heroic notions that have accrued to it:

When you see millions of the mouthless dead
 Across your dreams in pale battalions go,
 Say not soft things as other men have said,
 That you'll remember. For you need not so.
 Give them not praise. For, deaf, how should they know
 It is not curses heaped upon each gashed head?
 Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.
 Nor honour. It is easy to be dead.
 Say only this, "They are dead." Then add thereto,

"Yet many a better one has died before."
 Then, scanning all the o'ercrowded mass, should you
 Perceive one face that you loved heretofore.
 It is a spook. None wears the face you knew.
 Great death has made all his for evermore.

(10)

The echo of Achilles's words in the sonnet above, "Died Patroclus too who was a far better man than thou,"(11) suggests that there is a heroic dimension to Sorley's bleak stoicism, and indeed one discovers, mostly from his letters and lesser-known poems, that to a significant extent his experience of war was given meaning and made enduring by his belief in the heroic code. He found, in the Greek heroic attitude to war in particular, precisely the combination of sanity, unsentimentality, and nobility which he felt appropriate to express aspects of the First World War that stirred him. Such qualities, he suggests by his castigation of Brooke and others, were lacking in the war poetry of 1914.

The death of a school-fellow, who was killed in action in October 1914 while Sorley was still in training in England, moved him to use Achilles's famous line for the first time in the context of the War. As this extract reveals, he believed that it expressed the decorum proper to the circumstances:

H.W.R.'s death was a shock. Still, since Achilles's

"*καὶ Πάτροκλος, ὃ περ σέο πολλὸν ἀμείνων.*"

which should be read at the grave of every corpse in addition to the burial service, no saner and splendor comment on death has been made, especially, as here, where it seemed a cruel waste.

(12)

(10) Charles Hamilton Sorley : Marlborough and Other Poems
 (Cambridge U P, London 1932) p.78

(11) Homer : The Iliad xxi, 107

(12) Charles Hamilton Sorley : The Letters of Charles Sorley
 (C.U.P., London 1919) p.245

At the Front he turned to The Iliad and The Odyssey to reassure himself that the vast, bewildering process of war in which he was involved had an ordered and noble precedent. All this is discernible in a charming verse letter he wrote to a Master at Marlborough, which begins: "I have not brought my Odyssey" The first part of the poem traces Agamemnon's army's preparation for war, and the journey to Troy, and it is clear from the intimacy of his description and the interspersing of modern terms that he sees a relationship between his experience and the Greek. This connection is made explicit in the conclusion when he moves to the present:

And now the fight begins again,
The old war-joy, the old war-pain.
Sons of one school across the sea
We have no fear to fight -

(13)

This is further reinforced by Sorley's use of the formulaic phrases 'war-joy' and 'war-pain', a device that is common to all heroic poetry, and which has the effect of suggesting that the First World War troops share the comradeship, exhilaration in fighting, and the agony of war that Homer and the other heroic poets described.

In another poem of this period he reveals a belief in the heroic conviction that man's proper destiny is the life of action that war demands:

Our eyes should see no other sense
Than this, eternally to DO -
Our joy, our task, our recompense;
...
(... some long strife, more than this play,
Some task that will be stern indeed) -
We ever new, we ever young,
We happy creatures of a day!
What will the gods say, seeing us strung
As nobly and as taut as they?

(14)

The concluding lines above seem to urge a parallel between the situation of the soldiers of the First World War and that of the Homeric heroes who, despite their nobility, strength, and independence of mind, were the pawns of jealous gods, and were doomed.

It is significant also that when Sorley faced going into battle for the first time he evaluated his own conduct and that of others according to the old heroic standard. On 5 October 1915, on the night before the attack (which he himself referred to as "the eve of our crowning hour") he wrote to a friend:

To be able to prove oneself no coward to oneself, will be great, if it comes off: but suppose one finds oneself fail in the test? I dread my own censorious self in the coming conflict - I also have great physical dread of pain. Still, a good edge is given to the sword here.*

(15)

How much his mind had been running along these lines is evident from a poem written a month earlier as a tribute to a contemporary of his at Marlborough, who had been killed in action at Hooze and who had received the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross:

There is no fitter end than this.
No need is now to yearn nor sigh.
We know the glory that is his,
A glory that can never die.

Surely we knew it long before,
Knew all along that he was made
For a swift radiant morning, for
A sacrificing swift night-shade.

(16)

* Five days later Sorley was dead; killed by the bullet of a sniper.

(15) C H Sorley : Letters op.cit. p.312

(16) C H Sorley : Marlborough and Other Poems op.cit. p.85

The heroic aspect of Sorley's response to the war has received scant attention. This may be partly on aesthetic grounds, for, as the poem above confirms, his heroic verse tends to be surprisingly conventional in diction and lacking in the intellectual effort that informs his stoical and analytical poems. Nevertheless, in order to be truthful to Sorley it is absolutely necessary to consider everything he wrote in relation to the war. In so doing one sees that he cannot justly be viewed, as de Sola Pinto and others have viewed him, as the stepping-stone from Brooke to Sassoon.

Although the response of Sorley, Sassoon, and Owen to the war has been commonly represented as one of unambiguous protest, it is evident to a significant extent in their poetry that they held beliefs in heroic and military values, and this argues for a less pre-conceived and more open approach to the literature of the First World War. After all, they (and indeed all the major writers of the war) had *volunteered* for military service, and they felt a correspondingly deep commitment to their duty as *soldiers*. The last point needs to be emphasized because another widely-held idea about the poets who were officers was that they believed that their primary role was to care for the men and to articulate their wrongs; whereas, as much of the above material reveals, they were equally concerned to be inspirational examples of coolness and courage in battle. Owen's letter, revealing a tremendous elation that he had been able to provide such an example to his company, underlines not only the importance that was attached to this aspect of the officer's role, but also the officer poets' acceptance of the dual and antithetical nature of their purpose.

I lost all my earthly faculties, and fought like an angel.

...

With this corporal who stuck to me and shadowed me like your prayers I captured a German Machine Gun and scores of prisoners.

I'll tell you exactly how another time. I only shot one man with my revolver (at about 30 yards!); The rest I took with a smile. The same thing happened with other parties all along the line we entered.

I have been recommended for the Military Cross; and have recommended every single N.C.O. who was with me!

My nerves are in perfect order.

I came out in order to help these boys - directly by leading them as well as an officer can; indirectly, by watching their sufferings that I may speak of them as well as a pleader can. I have done the first.

(17)

The emphasis which officers put on prowess was partly in response to the fact that the men measured their worth in very similar terms. "I found," writes Graves in Goodbye to All That, "that the only thing that the regiment respected in young officers was personal courage." (18) This is confirmed by Frank Richards, a private in the Royal Welch: "We always judged a new officer by the way he conducted himself in the trench, and if he had guts we respected him." This simple formula is the basis of all his opinions of the officers and men he encountered:

His name was Mr. Fletcher and all the men in B swore he was not only the bravest man in France, but had more brains than all the Battalion put together. ...

We had a man in our platoon who was one of the most windy men I ever saw in France, and when working on the parapet at night, the report of a rifle was enough to make him jump back in the trench shivering with fright: it was pitiable to see him when the enemy were shelling our line. ...

I thought the Doctor would have been awarded the Victoria Cross. He had honestly earned it. ... I have always held that he was the coolest man under fire that ever stepped foot in France.

(19)

(17) Wilfred Owen : quoted in Wilfred Owen: A Biography
by Jon Stallworthy (OUP, London 1977) p.278

(18) Robert Graves : Goodbye to All That (Jonathan Cape, London 1929)
p.174

(19) Frank Richards : Old Soldiers Never Die (Angus and Robertson,
London 1969) pp.267, 98, 239, 101.

The reality to these writers of the values of prowess, honour, comradeship, and heroic pride makes one understand why Robert Graves in 1958, in distinguishing between the soldiers of the First World War and those of the Second, implied that what set them apart was the intensity of belief in the heroic code:

A World War II colonel asked me the other day: 'How is it that, in your war, a battalion could lose up to eighty per cent of its effectives, and be ready for a counter-attack the next day? In Normandy, ten per cent losses were considered enough to destroy a battalion's offensive spirit.'

Perhaps it was because we were most of us serving for private, patriotic reasons. ... As volunteers our sense of personal contract had fostered a suicidal pride in being front-line soldiers. We belonged to the trenches, we and our friends, come what might; the only honourable release was either death or a blighty one.

(20)

Another important consequence of the anti-heroic bias among modern critics is that they have tended to view the poetry of the First World War in isolation from the war poetry of the past. Their justification is that the war poetry tradition is predominantly an heroic one, and thus can have no meaningful connection with the anti-heroic and anti-war poetry of the 1914-1918 conflict. However, as the above brief examination of Sorley, Sassoon, and Owen reveals, even writers normally regarded as being wholly committed to protest showed a response which is not nearly as homogeneous as one has been led to believe. Despite their anguished awareness of the suffering which war inflicts and of the need to speak for the victims, the trench poets still retain heroic beliefs and attitudes which had been formed in the pre-war period. Moreover, no small part of their protest is derived from their outrage at the fact that the manner in which the war was conducted fell so far below their conception of heroic standards.

(20) Robert Graves : Radio broadcast, 'What was that war like, sir?'
 printed in The Crane Bag and other Disputed Subjects
 (Cassell, London 1969) p.58

Indeed, it is the tension which such a discrepancy sets up that gives much of the poetry of the First World War its peculiar force and poignancy, and which distinguishes it from the poetry of the Second World War, which was a conflict in which there were few heroic expectations, and consequently less of a sense of outrage. In addition, a great deal of the appeal of the style of the trench poets comes from their thorough understanding of and early immersion in heroic rhetoric. Ironically, this is illustrated best by Owen's moving and powerful denunciation of the heroic tradition in 'Dulce et Decorum Est'. He writes to a poetess* who had been extolling the glories of war:

My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

(21)

It would appear, then, in view of the influence of the heroic tradition on the trench poets' response to the war, that this tradition should be given more than the cursory glance which it usually receives in studies of their poetry. Certainly, in the case of Isaac Rosenberg, David Jones, and Frederic Manning, whose war poetry and prose form the subject of this dissertation, a study of the aspects of the heroic tradition which influenced them is essential for a full understanding of their work. Their response to the war was both shaped and given direction by their encounters with the heroic tradition in Victorian and Edwardian poetry, in the Bible, in Greek, Germanic and Old Welsh literature, the *chansons de geste* and romances of the Middle Ages, and in certain Shakespearean plays.

* The poetess was Jessie Pope, author of the collections Jessie Pope's War Poems (1915), More War Poems (1915), and Simple Rhymes for Stirring Times (1916).

What follows, then, in the remainder of this chapter, is a representation of the heroic tradition through certain significant heroic works, examined chronologically. Their significance in this instance, and thus the basis of my choice, lies firstly in the fact that some are seminal works of the heroic tradition, a tradition which I see as coming to new and valid fulfilment in the poetry and prose produced by Rosenberg, Jones and Manning out of their experience of the trenches; and, secondly, in that others are works which either exerted an important influence on the response of the three writers to war, or, as in the case of Shakespeare's Henry V, provide a means of comparison and of evaluating their achievement. Henry V is the only considerable work in the English heroic tradition prior to the First World War which explores the suffering of war as well as its heroism. The value of such a survey is augmented by the fact that both Manning and Rosenberg had produced considerable heroic works before they became embroiled in the experience of the Western Front. These works enable one to see how much their authors' imagination and creativity were stirred by the fierce, independent heroes of the Bible and of Greek and Germanic legend, and thus to examine their heroic vision before it was modified by the experience of war. This examination forms the introductory chapter to the studies of Rosenberg's and Manning's responses to the war. David Jones's early heroic writing, which was in fact the only writing he did prior to In Parenthesis, is confined to a few pages. Nevertheless, it affords an important glimpse into Jones's early reaction to the war, enabling one to see that he responded initially in a conventional manner, in the heroic terms of 1914, and thus provides an appropriate introduction to the study - in the fifth chapter of the present work - of his more mature heroic vision in In Parenthesis.

The Heroic Tradition (*)

The heroic tradition in English literature has its origins in the heroic poetry of early warrior societies which held heroic standards of conduct. Such societies, which include the Greek, the Hebraic, the Asiatic, Celtic, Old French, and the Old English, were organized on a military basis for military ends, and believed that a man's greatness lay in the action of war. The qualities which these societies deemed desirable in a warrior - strength, courage, endurance, prowess at arms, and a desire for honour - were enshrined in their legendary heroes, of whom their bards sang. Although the legendary heroes moved in what was assumed to be a real world and the poet was careful to establish a sense of reality, the sanction of tradition and the time interval between the world of the heroes and that of the poet enabled him to heighten the human qualities of the hero and the ordeals which tested these qualities.

Thus the great power and strength of Achilles are shown on numerous occasions, but never more so than when he decides to go back into battle to avenge the death of Patroclus, and he roars his battle cry from the ramparts:

*τρίς μὲν ὑπὲρ τάφρου μεγάλ' ἔαχε διὸς Ἀχιλλεύς,
τρίς δὲ κυκλήθησαν Τρῶες κλειτοὶ τ' ἐπίκουροι.
ἐνθα δὲ καὶ τότε δλοντο δυνάδευα φῶτες ἄριστοι
ἀμφὶ σφοῖς ὀγέεσσι καὶ ἔγχεσιν.*

** (22)

The mere sight of Achilles and the sound of his voice are enough to cause terror and destruction.

* Pages 16-19 and 25-36 are adapted from Chapter One of my unpublished Master's dissertation:
K M McArthur : The Collapse of the Heroic Tradition in Twentieth Century English War Poetry (University of Cape Town, 1979)

Beowulf exhibits his great powers of strength and endurance by swimming against Breca for five days and nights in a wild sea; later, these same qualities make the monster Grendel quail amidst an orgy of killing Hrothgar's finest warriors:

750 Sōna þæt onfunde fyrena hyrde,
 þæt hē ne mētte middan-geardes,
 eorþan scēatta on elran men
 mund-gripe māran; hē on mōde wearð
 forht on ferhðe; nō þy ær fram meahte.

* (23)

Strength, endurance, and prowess in battle are important heroic qualities, and every hero has them to a marked degree, but the essence of their heroism is their pursuit of honour. Ostensibly, they might fight for a king or country, but primarily they are bound to the winning of glory for themselves. Achilles refuses to fight even when begged to by Agamemnon, and it is only when he remembers that his mother has told him that he will be faced with a choice of staying in Troy and winning glory and renown, or returning home to a long and inglorious old age, that he follows the urgings of his heroic nature. Similarly, Roland refuses to blow his horn to summon aid from Charlemagne, even though he is urged to do so by his comrade Oliver,

(22) Homer : The Iliad book XVIII, 228-231 in The Poetry of Homer
 ed. S E Basset (Berkeley 1938) p.210

** Three times over the rampart Achilles shouted his battle cry
 Three times Trojan and allies were sheer amazed and confounded
 There and then were destroyed twelve men, most noble of Trojans
 Mid their chariots and spears.

(23) Beowulf ed. C L Wrenn, revised by W F Bolton
 (Harrap, London 1973) lines 750-4 p.126

* The upholder of evils at once knew
 he had not met, on middle earth's
 extremest acres, with any man
 of harder hand-grip: his heart panicked.
 He was quit of the place no more quickly for that.

Beowulf ed. E V Rieu, trans. M Alexander
 (Penguin Classics, London 1973) p.74

who can see that they will be overwhelmed by the Saracen force:

"Ne placet Deu," ço li respunt Rollant,
 "Que ço seit dit de nul hume vivant,
 Ne pur paien, que ja seie cornant!"

* (24)

Beowulf spurns the weapons and armour pressed on him for the fight against Grendel solely because this makes the fight doubly honourable. All these incidents illustrate how much greater was the desire for individual glory than concern for the interests of the king for whom the hero fought. As C M Bowra says, the heroic spirit is:

... the reflection of men's desire to be in the last degree themselves, to satisfy their ambitions in lives of abundant adventure, to be greater than other men in their superior gifts and to be bound by no obligation except to do their utmost in valour and endurance.

(25)

Heroic poetry is not necessarily epic, nor is it entirely confined to legendary heroes. Occasionally, poets felt that a contemporary battle was in the true heroic tradition and should be treated accordingly. The outstanding example of this is the superb Battle of Maldon, which was composed after a disastrous battle in 991, when the English army, led by the earl Byrhtnoth, was utterly routed by a Viking raiding band. The scope of the poem does not allow the hero to be as fully realized as the epic heroes, but he is certainly cast in their mould. He has their charismatic power, as can be seen by the disciplining and inspirational effect of his presence, and by the heroic pride in his boast to the Viking herald:

* "Never may it please God," Roland replied to him, "that it should be said by any living man that I sounded my horn for a pagan."

(24) Pierre Jonin ed.: La Chanson de Roland (Galimard, Avignon 1979)
 p.140

(25) C M Bowra : From Virgil to Milton (Macmillan, London 1945) p.12

... hēr stynt unforcūð	eorl mid his werode
þe wile gealgan	ēþel ysne
AEþelres eard,	ealdres mines
folc and foldan.	

* (26)

Despite the fact that Byrhtnoth makes his appeal to his followers' loyalty to king and country, there is no trace of patriotism in their behaviour. Their commitment is to him personally - to hold fast to the vows that they made to him in the mead-hall, until they too are cut down. They are acting in accordance with the rules of the Germanic heroic tradition, which dictate that the warrior must be prepared to fight and die for his lord, in exchange for being kept at the lord's hall, and being supplied liberally with food, mead, and gifts of gold rings. When Byrhtnoth is killed, a number of them affirm their loyalty in a series of short speeches which suggest, by their simplicity and by the intensity of the feeling, that this affirmation was far from being an empty heroic convention. Of all the avowals, nothing in the whole English heroic tradition is more moving than the invocation of the Old Companion to his comrades as their strength begins to fail:

Hige sceal þē heardra,	heorte þē cēnre,
mōð sceal þē mære,	þē ūre maegen lýtlað.

** (27)

* " ... here stands a noble earl with his soldiers who will dare to stand in defence of this land, land of Aethelred, lord and master, its people and soil."

Translation by C M Bowra in Heroic Poetry 4th.edition (Macmillan, London 1966) p.113

(26) Dorothy Whitelock (ed.) : Sweet's Anglo Saxon Reader (orig.1876)
(This ed. rev. Whitelock, OUP London 1967) p.118 lines 51-4

** "Will shall be harder, heart the bolder,
Courage the more, as our might lessens."

Translation by C M Bowra in Heroic Poetry p.113

(27) Dorothy Whitelock (ed.) : Sweet's Anglo Saxon Reader p.126
lines 312-3

The complete destruction of another war-band, through the heroic pride and over-confidence of its leaders, caught the interest of the Welsh bard, Aneirin, in the seventh century. In a lament, bearing the same name as the war-band, The Gododin, he described how three hundred carefully chosen warriors of the retinue of Mynyddog Mwynfawr rode from Eiddyn (Edinburgh) to Catraeth in Yorkshire, and were utterly defeated by a Saxon army, with the result that only three, including the poet, escaped. This poem, which is central to the Welsh heroic tradition, has no narrative development as have the epics, or even the Battle of Maldon, for it is made up of a series of elegiac lays; but the qualities that it commends, and the use of certain conventions, are to be found in all heroic poetry.

The heroic poet's delight in the magnificent attire of the hero is very marked in this poem, for it abounds in details of the splendour of the Gododin war-band, clad in their dark blue armour and riding to Catraeth on war-horses equipped with matching dark blue trappings. Befitting their rank, the armour of these Celtic aristocrats is highlighted by their torques of gold, by their gold- and enamel-bordered shields and gold spurs, and by the occasional diadem such as that worn by Kayawc Kynhorawc:

Wearing a diadem in the forefront, a wolf in passion: there were beads of amber, jewelled points, yea circlets round his temples: precious were the amber beads of the worth of a wine horn.

(28)

The comparison of the warrior's ferocity in battle to a wolf's is typical of heroic poetry, where heroic qualities are usually stressed by the use of animal and bird metaphors. Thus the strength, pride and

(28) E Anwyl (trans.) : The Book of Aneirin in *The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodion*, 1903-1904 p.122

swiftness of the Gododin are brought out by the comparison of them to oxen, prancing steeds, eagles, wolves, and bulls: "Bddvan, son of Bleiddvan, the undaunted, ... an eagle graceful of flight", "he (Gwrfelling the robust) was like a pure white ox in the vestibule of Eiddyn", and "the battle-hound of passion" are typical examples. Occasionally, as in the lay to Wit, comparison is made to other aspects of nature, as in : "no more than stirs a broad based rock of the sea was stirred Wit, the son of Peithan".

In this poem, the well-known heroic convention, in which the circling of the battlefield by birds of prey presages doom, is used to great effect when the description of the splendour of the warriors is interspersed with grim references to the ravens tearing at and consuming their flesh:

With his shield upon his shoulder he welcomed the spear
like sparkling wine from vessels of glass. Silver held his
mead but gold was his due; nurtured on wine was Gwaednerth,
son of Llywri ... His hand satiated the beaks of the grey
eagles: his loppings were their best meat.

(29)

Although, by virtue of its being a lament, the presentation of heroic characteristics is more incidental than direct, this poem has great vigour, and very obviously emanates from an age with a living heroic tradition. The warriors are not a faceless unit, but like the loyal followers of Byrhtnoth, are a group of strong individuals, combined by their obligations to their leader and by their comradeship.

Because the feudal system is at least partly a military system, with the knight as central unit, the writers of the *chansons de geste* and the early romances continued to regard war in much the

same way as the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic battle poets and the epic poets had done before them. These writers, like their predecessors, are interested in war only in so far as it provides a testing ground for the heroic virtues. In many of the romances, war is dispensed with altogether, and the hero proves himself against bizarre adversaries. Dragons, giants, and elves are particularly popular opponents. The *chanson de geste* and the romance are therefore, like the epic and the earlier battle poetry, a poetry of the hero and not a poetry of war.

The influence on contemporary thinking exerted by the later romances has been so strong that one is accustomed to think that the chivalrous knight, the pattern of all courtesy, loyalty, largesse, and prowess, was the characteristic hero of the whole of the Middle Ages. In fact, nothing could be less chivalrous, in the fifteenth century meaning of the word, than most of the heroes of the *chansons de geste* and the early romances from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries. In their unrestricted and usually ruthless quest for honour, and in their immoderate demonstration of prowess, these knights are far more akin to the Homeric heroes than the chivalrous heroes of the later Middle Ages.

Gradually, however, in the late fifteenth century, in response to a growing belief that the traditional qualities of knighthood "be diverted into socially useful standards" (30), that complex of virtues that makes up courtesy - correct conduct on the battlefield, modesty, good manners, care for the unprotected - came to be added to the heroic archetype. The hero of this nature who comes to mind is Chaucer's "verray parfit gentil knyght", but it is Malory's

(30) C Moorman : *Kings and Captains* pp.163-4 , quoted in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* Larry D Benson (ed.) (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1977) p.149

charming, fallible Sir Lancelot who, of all late Mediaeval heroes, captures the imagination. His virtues are summed up in the eulogy on his death in the last book of the romance:

A Lancelot, thou were the hede of al Crysten knyghtes ...
 Thou were never matched of erthely knyghtes hande. And thou
 were the curtest knyght that ever bare shelde. And thou
 were the truest frende to thy lovar that ever bestrade hors,
 and thou were the trewest lover, of a synful man, that ever
 loved woman, and thou were the kyndest man that strake
 wyth swerde. And thou were the godlyest persone that ever
 cam emoge the prees of knyghtes, and thou was the mekest
 man and the jentylllest that ever ete in halle emonge ladyes,
 and thou were the sternest knyght to thy mortal foo that
 ever put spere in the reeste.

(31)

In common with the earlier heroes, Lancelot is superior in arms to all other knights. He is as strong and as determined in battle as Achilles, but his fieriness is tempered by his mercy and his self-control. Even in the most furious of his encounters on the battlefield, as when he fights against Gawain, he does not lose his integrity, and despite Gawain's shouting insults at him, he refuses to continue to fight when Gawain is too wounded to stand:

I woll do batayle uppon you all the whyle I se you stande
 uppon your feete; but to smyte a wounded man that may not
 stonde, God defende me from such a shame.

(32)

Lancelot's refusal to take unfair advantage of a severely wounded opponent on the battlefield is a considerable development of the original chivalric code that was operative in the early Middle Ages. To be termed chivalrous then meant no more than that a knight was strong and courageous, and had a rudimentary idea of fair play. This involved not killing a man from behind, nor with a thrown javelin; issuing a challenge before attacking; and respecting a truce if one

(31) Thomas Malory : Works (OUP London 1971) ed. Eugene Vinaver p.725

(32) op.cit. p.706

were made. As Lancelot's array of other virtues indicates, the chivalrous hero of the late Middle Ages was expected to be an accomplished courtier and lover as well.

The emphasis on courtly love is a fifteenth-century phenomenon, and as Lancelot's relationship with Guinevere reveals, the lady - that stern arbiter of all behaviour at court, at the tournament, and on the battlefield, and the one whom the knight had sworn to serve whatever her demand - exerted a far greater curb on his individuality than his sovereign lord did, or had done in the early Middle Ages. When the issue was between serving the interests of the sovereign or pursuing individual glory, Achilles, Byrhtnoth, and Roland do not hesitate to choose the latter course. Lancelot, on the other hand, never deliberately goes counter to Guinevere's wishes.

Of all the writers of the past it is the Elizabethan dramatists who present a view of war which, in its completeness, has similarities with that of Frederic Manning and David Jones. It is a view of war which differs markedly from that of the Mediaeval predecessors of the Elizabethans, for, while it too is predominantly heroic, it admits vivid critical debate about war - something which was unknown in the *chansons de geste* and the romances. This difference in outlook is a reflection of the very different audiences whom these writers addressed: the Mediaeval poets wrote for an aristocracy whose position in society was based on their ability to fight and to lead their retinues in time of war; the Elizabethan dramatists wrote for a wider public, comprising all ranks of a society which had long since lost its feudal military character, but which remained deeply interested in war, and in the military hero.

There are many reasons why the Elizabethans were fascinated by war: the threat of a Spanish invasion during a period of twenty-five years of Elizabeth's reign was a major reason, but as important were the profound nostalgia of the upper classes for the chivalry of the Middle Ages, the influence of Classical heroic literature, and the number of inspiring, heroic men produced by the age itself. Thus war remained a highly topical contemporary theme for drama, ballads and treatises.

By the end of the fifteenth century the nature of warfare had changed from being a tournament for magnificently arrayed knights and their retinues to an exercise in logistics - a matter of guns, manoeuvres of troops, and sieges. However, the more antithetical to chivalry the new technical, collective warfare became, the more tenaciously the nobility clung to their military traditions, and the less approving they were of new developments. There was, in particular, a strong distaste for ordnance. It was felt by many that the indiscriminate death dealt by shot and ball ruined war as a finishing school for the knightly character. What horrified them most was that gunpowder allowed a common soldier to kill a knight. In 1590 an English knight cried:

Blessed were the times which lack the dreadful fury of those diabolical engines ... an invention that allows a base and cowardly hand to take the life of a brave knight. ... and when I think of that, I am tempted to say it grieves me to the heart to have adopted this profession of knight-errantry in such a detestable age as we now live in. For although no danger frightens me, still it causes me misgivings to think that powder and lead may deprive me of the chance of winning fame and renown by the strength of my arm and the edge of my sword, over all the known earth.

(34)

(34) John Hale : 'War and Public Opinion in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries' *Past and Present* 22, July 1961

Despite the difficulties created by technological advances, the knights-errant survived, "seeking the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth." The finest example of this type of hero is Sir Philip Sidney, who, while fighting with great valour and extreme recklessness, was fatally wounded at Zutphen in 1586. When he died, as his friend Fulke Greville discloses, the whole nation was plunged into gloom, and no less than five hundred elegies were written. Indeed, most of the Elizabethans delighted in reckless heroism. They were thrilled by Sir Richard Grenville's suicidal attempt to take on the whole Spanish navy in the Azores, and entirely approved of Sir Humphrey Gilbert's fatal insistence that he would transfer to the tiny ten-ton 'Squirrel' in case his men said he was afraid of the sea. Even the rash and passionate Earl of Essex, who pursued his own course in Ireland in defiance of the Council of State, and then brought England close to civil war with his own rebellion in 1600, both inspired and alarmed the court and the people. The naked pursuit of individual glory could, in reality, be as little countenanced by the Renaissance State as by the Mediaeval one, but the Elizabethans, free of the shackling conventions of Feudalism and chivalry and with their minds greatly stimulated by the influx of Greek and Roman literature and the literature of the Italian Renaissance, were fascinated by the old heroic spirit that will brook no restriction. However, a substantial number weighed up with equally strong feelings the terrible cost of heroic pride and ambition, particularly when these qualities occur in a man or woman with great power.

Robert Burton's anger was deeply roused by the honour men paid to war, and as he began writing the Anatomy of Melancholy towards the end of Elizabeth's reign, this passage from Volume One may be taken to be representative of the turmoil of feeling that war and

the pursuit of honour awoke, and the freedom with which opposing opinions might be expressed:

And yet this supposed honour, popular applause, desire of immortality by these means, pride and vain glory spurs them on many times rashly and unadvisedly to make away with themselves and multitudes of others. Alexander was sorry because there were no more worlds for him to conquer; he is admired by some for it, *animosa vox videtur, et regina*, 'twas spoken like a prince; but as wise Seneca censures him 'twas *vox uni quissima at stultissima* 'twas spoken like a bedlam fool."

(37)

It is evident that the Elizabethan conception of the hero would be a much more complex one than the clearly defined knightly hero of the Middle Ages. The hero that is closest to the Mediaeval ideal is Shakespeare's Henry V, yet even there, the pattern of heroism is markedly different from that of Mediaeval romance. In the plays that do not draw on English history for their material, the pattern of heroism diverges even more widely from the Mediaeval pattern. Tamburlaine, Bussy D'Ambois, and Coriolanus, whom Bernard Bergonzi describes as "the loud mouthed colossi who strode across the dramatic stages of the time" (38), are vivid re-enactments of the old heroic spirit, with its stress on fierce individualism. No doubt this is due to the re-awakened interest in Classical literature, but it is also reflective of the heroic spirit manifested by Grenville, Frobisher, Essex, Drake, and Raleigh.

The most striking example of the classical hero in Elizabethan literature is Marlowe's Tamburlaine. Like the Greek heroes, the fierce beauty of Tamburlaine's person, his ambition, his warlike

(37) Robert Burton : The Anatomy of Melancholy v.1 ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan Smith (Tudor, New York 1948) p.60

(38) Bernard Bergonzi : Heroes' Twilight (Constable, London 1965) p.12

valour, and, above all, his confidence in himself, are on such an immense scale that he transcends the merely human. Like them too, his world is a seemingly boundless one, that is not subject to the morality of ordinary men. Critics, shocked by the enormity of Tamburlaine's cruelty, have attempted to prove that Marlowe presents it as a tragic flaw, but it is entirely consistent with the classical heroic character, that ruthlessly destroys any obstacle that hinders the fulfilment of its aspirations. As in The Iliad, there is no criticism in the play of the hero's terrible excesses, and at the end, the dying Tamburlaine, far from suffering any remorse, calls for a map, on which he nostalgically traces his life, and points with sadness to the lands which death will now prevent him from possessing: "And shall I die and this unconquered?" (39)

The heroic stature of Shakespeare's Coriolanus comes entirely from his greatness as a warrior and from his warrior-like defiance of the conventions of peacetime society. This is apparent in the First Act of the play, where every effort is made to augment his military virtuosity. He is not merely praised upon his return from war, but is seen vividly engaged in battle. It is in this early battle scene that we sense the quality of fierce individualism that is the essence of his heroism, and the key to his downfall: "I'll fight with none but thee, for I do hate thee/ Worse than a promise breaker" (40), he cries, as he springs at Aufidius, the only man whose prowess approaches his own.

(39) Christopher Marlowe : Tamburlaine the Great ed. Una Ellis-Fermor (Methuen, London 1931 reprinted 1951) part II Act V Scene ii line 150

(40) William Shakespeare : Coriolanus in the Arden edition of the Works of William Shakespeare (Methuen, London 1976) Act I scene viii lines 1-2

This early image of Coriolanus as an individual warrior is magnified to the superhuman when Cominius describes his descent on Rome at the head of the Volscian army:

He is their god. He leads them like a thing
Made by some other deity than nature,
That shapes men better; and they follow him
Against us brats, with no less confidence
Than boys pursuing summer butterflies,
Or butchers killing flies.

(41)

Like Shakespeare's great chivalric hero Henry V, Coriolanus's heroic power lies partly in his ability to inspire his troops. So great is his inspiration that the Volscians believe themselves to be vastly superior to the Romans. This inspiration is, however, of an entirely different nature from Henry's, which lies rather in his eloquence and deep understanding of the men he leads. Coriolanus, on the other hand, inspires because he blazes with the intensity of his individual quest, which at this moment is to wreak revenge on Rome.

The last speech of Coriolanus is dramatically fitting, for it is a magnificent heroic boast, the assertion of his greatness as an independent warrior, and a defiance of Aufidius and Antium, who have dared to challenge his superiority:

Cut me to pieces, Volscies; men and lads,
Stain all your edges on me. - Boy! False hound!
If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I
Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli:
Alone I did it. - Boy!

(42)

Viewed in this way, there is little essential difference between the nature of Tamburlaine's heroism and Coriolanus's. Both are superior to

(41) op.cit. Act IV scene vi lines 91-6

(42) op.cit. Act V scene vi lines 111-6

other men in their extraordinary military prowess, in their boundless pride and confidence in themselves, and in their ruthless single-mindedness. Where Coriolanus does differ from Tamburlaine is that this rash and most unreflective of Shakespeare's heroes does, by the end of the play, achieve an understanding of his own nature, and of the nature of the world he lives in. He understands fully the significance of yielding to his mother's and his wife's plea that he will spare Rome, but he faces his certain destruction with a calm courage that is different from the flamboyant courage of his entry into Corioli:

O my mother! mother! O!
 You have won a happy victory to Rome;
 But, for your son, believe it, O! believe it,
 Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,
 If not most mortal to him. But let it come.
(43)

Only a small part of the agony of his choice is the knowledge that the Volscies will kill him; far harder for him is that, in being merciful to Rome, he must deny his honour, and become the thing most detestable to a soldier, "a promise breaker". Tamburlaine, in common with other heroes of Elizabethan drama conceived on the old epic pattern, and the chivalric heroes of the Romances, knows nothing of such conflicts, nor does he attain the insight of Coriolanus. He is at the end as he was at the beginning. Like Tamburlaine, Coriolanus reasserts himself as a hero just before he is killed, as was seen above, by his splendid heroic boast. This return to the old self, at this moment in the play, is deeply stirring, for not only is it a valediction to that self, but it recalls the heroic tradition of Maldon, where the knowledge that death is imminent calls forth a defiant courage and effort.

Caught though their imagination was by the untrammelled heroic spirit, when it came to portraying an English hero the Elizabethans looked for a more responsible, less atavistic model. They found their ideal in Henry V, who, against heavy odds, had won the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. The unpleasant aspects of his reign and military career had become sufficiently dimmed by the passage of two hundred years to allow the brilliance of Agincourt to shine through undiminished, and to inspire at least four major works in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: the lengthy prose account of him by Raphael Holinshed in his Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1586-7); an anonymous play, The Famous Victories of Henry V (1588); William Shakespeare's The Life of King Henry the Fifth (1600); and the narrative poem by Michael Drayton, The Battle of Agincourt (1627). Of these, Shakespeare's play, both at the time and in the centuries that followed, has been the most famous and the most popular. Indeed, Henry V has become the measure of the English chivalrous hero, and the play itself, which is the first literary work to examine thoroughly the horror as well as the glory of war, is equally important in the English heroic tradition. This play must, therefore, be considered to be a pivotal work.

It is the following heroic view of Prince Hal in King Henry IV : Part One, provided by a member of the enemy camp, Sir Richard Vernon, that receives full and brilliant expression in The Life of Henry V:

I saw young Harry, with his beaver on,
His cushes on his thighs, gallantly arm'd,
Rise from the ground like feather'd Mercury,
And vaulted with such ease into his seat,
As if an angel dropp'd down from the clouds,
To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus
And witch the world with noble horsemanship.

What is interesting about the man Henry V is the harmonious fusion of the old heroic spirit with the chivalric. In Acts One and Two of the play, Henry differs little in attitude and action from the brilliant, pagan heroes of the Elizabethan stage. The portrait of him in the prologue:

Then should the war-like Harry, like himself,
Assume the part of Mars; and at his heels,
Leash'd in like hounds, should famine, sword, and fire
Crouch for employment.

(45)

is reinforced by his proud boast to the Dauphin's emissary:

But tell the Dauphin I will keep my state,
Be like a king and show my sail of greatness
When I do rouse me in my throne of France:

...

But I will rise there with so full a glory
That I will dazzle all the eyes of France.

(46)

The similarity of these lines to Tamburlaine's first splendid assertion of his power is striking:

I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains,
And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about:
And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere
Than Tamburlaine be slain or overcome.

(47)

In Act III, after Henry has terrified the citizens of Harfleur into capitulating, his resemblance to Tamburlaine ends, and heroic virtues which are appropriate to a leader and a chivalric hero come to the

(44) William Shakespeare : King Henry IV : Part One ed. J H Walker
(Heinemann, London 1961) Act IV scene 1 lines 104-110

(45) William Shakespeare : The Life of Henry V ed. J H Walker
(Heinemann, London 1961) Chorus lines 5-8

(46) op.cit. Act I scene ii lines 274-6; 279-280

(47) Christopher Marlowe : Tamburlaine the Great
part II Act V Scene ii line 150

fore. The moment the town surrenders, his order is: "Use mercy to them all", and he forbids any plundering or abuse of the French. The quality of mercy has long been valued in English commanders, and there are few heroic war poems dating from the sixteenth century onwards that do not stress it. In addition to being merciful to his enemies, Henry is deeply concerned for the welfare of his army. The historical fact that Henry, realizing the condition of his army, was anxious to return to Calais after Harfleur, is shown very clearly in the play. The reason is not that Shakespeare wished to keep faithfully to history, but because, to an Englishman, there is nothing more heroic than the courageous stand of an English force against an overwhelming power. The climax of the play is thus not the victory of Agincourt, but Henry's speech to his army before the battle. From the moment Harfleur capitulates, the emphasis is on the desperate plight of the English, cut off from Calais. Sick, weary, and grossly outnumbered, none believes he will withstand the enemy in the coming battle. Henry's heroic power is in his ability to weld his tired, dispirited men into a unified fighting force, ready to do their utmost in valour and endurance. The moment of unity of his spirit with his soldiers' is marked in the speech by the transition from 'we' as the royal plural to the triumphant collective: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers." (48) There is nothing in the play to equal this moment. The actual victory is purposely played down in order to emphasize Henry's modesty and piety. "Praised be God, and not our strength for it!" (49) is his sole comment on Mountjoy's announcement that the day is Henry's. The English ideal hero is not merely the victorious leader, but the man who will fight courageously against hopeless odds, and who can inspire his men to do likewise.

(48) Shakespeare : Henry V Act IV scene iii line 60

(49) op.cit. Act IV scene vii line 84

The success of Shakespeare's portrayal of an English hero lies, however, only partially in the vigorous display of martial and heroic qualities. What contributes to the crowning effect of Henry's heroism is the fine balance between the harsh realities of war and its splendours. Offsetting Henry's martial and courageous speeches are those of a number of characters who do not view war as a contest of honour. For the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely, war is a convenient way of diverting the King's attention from their illegal possession of temporal land; for Pistol, Bardolph, and Nym, war is an excellent means of enriching themselves, either by swindling their fellow soldiers, or by plundering the French; and for Captain Fluellen, war is mostly an exercise in strategy. The high-point of the non-heroic view of war comes not in the speeches of any of these characters, but in the cutting comments that two English privates, Bates and Williams, make to the King on the morn of Agincourt. Firstly, the King has the unpleasant experience of having his heroism deflated by Bates:

He may show what outward courage he will; but I believe, as cold a night as 'tis, he could wish himself in the Thames up to the neck; - and so I would he were, and I by him at all adventures, so we were quit here.

(50)

While the King is struggling to recover from this blow, Williams reminds him of the terrible cost of war:

... and all those legs and arms and heads, chopped off in a battle, shall join together at a latter day, and cry all, "We died at such a place," some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon children rawly left.

(51)

(50) op.cit. Act IV scene 1 lines 119-123

(51) ibid. lines 143-9

Henry is seriously shaken by Williams's indictment of war, and his attempts to justify it to them are very inadequate. He has no better success with himself, as his chastened prayer painfully shows:

Not to-day, O Lord!
O! not to-day, think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown.
(52)

The reduction of Henry from the martial hero of Harfleur to the sombre man on the morn of Agincourt, and the parallel reduction of war from a splendid adventure to an ugly mêlée of dying and wounded men, cursing and crying for a surgeon, makes an impression that is never wholly countered by Henry's St.Crispin's Day speeches, nor by the English army's victory. Moreover, Williams's and Bates's reminder of the innocent victims of war - "wives left behind" and "children rawly left" - is taken up and expanded in the closing stages of the play, in the Duke of Burgundy's plea for peace. The Duke makes no reference to the horrors of battle in his speech; instead he builds up an ugly picture of the fertile countryside of France grown wild and corrupt through neglect, epitomized by the rusting plough, the dead vines, and ruined meadows covered in burrs and thistles. Finally, the effect that this unnatural disturbance of the life-giving rhythms has had on the people is shown:

And as our vineyards, fallows, meads, and hedges,
Defective in their natures, grow to wildness,
Even so our houses and ourselves and children
Have lost, or do not learn for want of time,
The sciences that should become our country,
But grow like savages, - as soldiers will,
That nothing do but meditate on blood, -
To swearing and stern looks, diffus'd attire,
And every thing that seems unnatural.
(53)

(52) op.cit. Act IV scene i lines 143-9

(53) op.cit. Act V scene ii lines 54-62

The dense texture of the imagery of this speech would suggest that Shakespeare was more imaginatively involved at this moment than in the martial scenes. Yet although the language of contemplative poetry such as this has a richer fabric, it would be false to the total experience of the play to feel that Shakespeare intended an undercurrent criticism of Henry in the last Act. On stage, the heroism of Henry dominates everything, and, instead of detracting from it, the anti-heroic speeches of Williams and Bates, and the Duke of Burgundy's exposure of the corrupting effect of war seem to bring a depth and reality to Henry's achievements. They have the effect of emphasizing that Henry triumphed in a real war and not in a chivalric tournament.

The Life of Henry V is the most rounded expression of martial heroism in an age which saw, with uncommon completeness, the splendours and the ugliness of war. It provides a fitting end to a long period in the English literature of war, a period covering a thousand years, during which poetry, chronicles, and dramas proceeded from a deep understanding of war.

The next important period which was to have a bearing on the response to war of the 1914-1918 generation began in the Napoleonic wars. The following lines from the closing stanzas of Walter Scott's 'Field of Waterloo' confidently associate mediaeval with modern chivalry, and provide an early indication of the nineteenth century chivalric revival:

Now, Island Empress, wave thy crest on high,
And bid the banner of thy patron flow,
Gallant St George, the flower of Chivalry,
For thou hast faced, like him, a dragon foe,
And rescued innocence from overthrow,
And trampled down, like him, tyrannic might,
And to the gazing world mayst proudly show
The chosen emblem of thy sainted Knight,
Who quelled devouring pride and vindicated right. (54)

The reason for the upsurge in interest in the code and trappings of chivalry need not be enquired into here: suffice it to say that, after a century in which chivalry was regarded as something either ridiculous or barbarous - one recalls Hume's summing-up of its most potent expression, the Crusades, as "the most signal and durable monument of human folly that has yet appeared in any age or nation" (55) - it came back. The chivalric code returned with such vigour, moreover, that its influence was evident in every aspect of the life of the middle and upper classes in the nineteenth century, including the artistic, cultural, intellectual, and political. Nor was chivalry to remain the preserve of the more privileged classes. As Mark Girouard points out (56), by the end of the century, its ideals had been extended to the working classes through such organizations as The Boys' Brigade and the Boy Scout Movement, whose philosophies were based on chivalry.

The chivalric revival was augmented by the Romantic Movement, which was preoccupied with heroes and chivalry. As Peter Thorslev says, this heroic side of Romanticism has been acknowledged insufficiently in the twentieth century, mostly because the modern conception of the Romantic Movement is based upon a value judgement and is by no means strictly historical. He goes on to say, in a chapter entitled 'Our Last Great Age of Heroes':

When we think of the great names among the English Romantic poets, we think first of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Blake and Byron - and probably in that

(54) Sir Walter Scott :

(55) David Hume : History of England v.1 (1762) pp.209,211

(56) Mark Girouard :

order. The names of Scott, Southey, Campbell, and Moore rise only as second thoughts, if at all. We need occasionally to be reminded that this value concept of the Romantic Movement was built up only very gradually over a period of almost a century, and that it was most emphatically not the picture that rose to the minds of the people of the age.

(57)

What gripped the imagination of the reading public in the nineteenth century, therefore, were not the works of literature that have exerted a powerful appeal in this century - works such as 'The Prelude', 'Ode to the West Wind', and 'The Eve of St Agnes' - but the heroic narratives in poetry and prose of Scott, Southey, Campbell, and Moore containing heroes who, like their Greek and Germanic predecessors, stand out above other men by virtue of their superior physical and intellectual powers, by the force of their passions, by their striking appearance, and by their certainty of their own ability.

The past was explored assiduously for heroes and heroines whose lives were dramatic enough and poignant enough to provide the basis for romantic, heroic development. Excellent for their purpose were the battle-torn history and legends of Scotland and Ireland, especially as many of the battles were ill-fated, and thus provided the poet with a situation which has always stirred the British - the display of the indomitable heroic spirit in defeat. Foremost in establishing a taste for tales of Celtic heroism were the numerous narrative poems and novels of Sir Walter Scott. His characters were largely inspired by the most colourful of Scotland's heroes: Rob Roy; Robert the Bruce; James the Fourth; and Prince Charles Edward; but he also included heroes from other parts of Britain, as well as inventing his own, and setting them in periods which he found stirring, such as

the Civil War. He protested that he found it difficult to depict the conventional hero, whom he seemed to imagine was always a model of virtue: "I am a bad hand at depicting a hero, properly so called," he told his friend Morrit, "and have an unfortunate propensity for the dubious characters of borderers, buccaneers, highland robbers, and all others of a Robin Hood description." (58) In fact, his heroes are meticulously observant of the rules and practices of chivalry, and are selfless in the upholding of their own and their clan's or country's honour. Even Marmion, the most villainous of Scott's heroes, is gallant and courteous, and in the end, eschewing his last hope of eternal salvation, he waves away the priest and uses the last of his failing energy to urge on the English army to victory at Flodden:

A light on Marmion's visage spread,
And fired his glazing eye:
With dying hand, above his head,
He shook the fragment of his blade,
And shouted 'Victory!
Charge Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!'
Were the last words of Marmion.

(59)

The desire for chivalric heroism which Scott and his contemporaries exploited so successfully did not end with his death in 1832, but, as revealed in the spate of chivalric works in poetry and prose in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, continued strongly into the twentieth century. As Amy Cruse says of Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome, published in 1841: "They recalled the delight that they and their fathers before them had felt in some of the spirited, heart stirring passages of Scott ... Guy Livingstone found that they stirred his blood like a trumpet." (60) The reference to Guy Livingstone is apt because

(58) Quoted in Hesketh Pearson : Walter Scott (Methuen, London 1954)
p.117

(59) Sir Walter Scott : The Poetical Works of Walter Scott ed. J Logie Robertson (Oxford University Press 1913)
Part VI Canto xxxii p.167***

he, the hero of the novel of the same name published in 1857, replaced Scott's and Macaulay's heroes as a model for young men. The novel is so cliché-ridden in style and in the depiction of the hero that it is now difficult to understand how it could have been so popular, or have been considered a serious piece of literature. However, its author, G A Lawrence, in his huge, black-mustachioed hero, had hit upon the vital, image-making combination of qualities to which young middle- and upper-class men aspired in the middle of the nineteenth century. Guy Livingstone comes of an ancient line, and has "the face of a stone crusader" to prove it. He is a giant in strength and size, but "lean in the flanks like a wolf hound." At school he triumphs over the bully, Buttons, the son of a Birmingham button manufacturer, and at Oxford he reduces a famous professional boxer to "a heap of blind, senseless, bleeding humanity." He moves in a set of lean, tough, hard-drinking and hard-riding friends, and, when not engaged in manly sports, spends his time swapping yarns with his friends in his smoking-room, or flirting with pretty women. His entanglement with "a *belle dame sans merci*", Flora Bellasys, leads to the abandonment of a beautiful, virtuous fiancée, and he engages in a period of dissipation on the Continent; but, even then, he pulls himself together to save an English girl-artist from being molested. He then rushes to the death-bed of his ex-fiancée to proclaim his love and repentance. Finally, he breaks his spine in a hunting accident and dies in agony, "but the brave heart and the iron nerve ruled the body to the last, imperially." (61)

(60) Amy Cruse : The Victorians and Their Books
(Unwin Brothers, Woking 1935) p.184

(61) G A Lawrence : Guy Livingstone (1857) in Novels of High Society from the Victorian Age ed. Anthony Powell
(Pilot Press, London 1947) see pp.325,323,479 etc.

It will be clear from this that much of Guy Livingstone's appeal was that, like Marmion, he combined the heady mixture of masculine wildness with an impeccable sense of honour and chivalry. Scott's heroes were, however, not the only standard of comparison for Guy Livingstone: at several points in the novel a parallel is drawn between him and another Victorian favourite, the brilliant but flawed Sir Lancelot, who also sinned but repented. By the middle of the century, the Arthurian legends, mainly in the form of Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur, re-published in 1816, had become so well-known that contemporary authors such as G A Lawrence could refer to them and be assured of being understood. A large part of the interest in Le Morte d'Arthur was that the Victorians felt that it embodied chivalric and heroic values relevant to their own age. In a recent exhaustive study of the appeal of the Arthurian legends to the Victorians, one of the two authors writes:

The 'honourable society', the noble fellowship of good knights bound together by loyalty and high endeavour, had an appeal for highly polarised Victorian society, not the least because of its predominantly masculine nature. Arthurian society, as depicted by Malory, recognised the ideal of the gentleman, a concept of great importance to the class-conscious Victorians, and which found its embodiment above all in Lancelot and Tristram.

(62)

As well as the fascination of their being caught in a dilemma of fiercely conflicting loyalties, these two heroes appealed because they had in abundance the chivalric and heroic virtues admired by upper- and middle-class Victorians - courtesy, honour, strength, skill at arms, courage, and good looks. Lancelot and Tristram, and other of the Arthurian knights, became the subjects of a large number of paintings,

(62) Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer : The Return of King Arthur: British and American Arthurian Literature since 1800
(D S Brewer, Cambridge 1983)

stained-glass windows, frescoes and poems, all designed to inspire lofty chivalric ideals. By far the most famous and controversial of these mid-century Arthurian projects was Tennyson's Idylls of the King. His moralistic treatment of Malory's depiction of King Arthur and his knights was applauded by many, but derided by the Pre-Raphaelites, who, with Meredith, felt that Arthur had been turned into "a crowned curate" (63), and that despite Tennyson's sad and virtuous condemnation of them, Lancelot and Tristram are still triumphantly the heroes.(64) Their own treatment of the Arthurian legends in their paintings and poems was romantic and centred on the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere. They took their cue from William Morris's remarkable set of poems, The Defence of Guinevere, published in 1858. Using the technique, developed by Browning, of direct broken verse, Morris makes the reader feel privy to the workings of the mind and inner feelings of Guinevere, Lancelot, and other principals of Arthur's court. In that the chivalric code of this company is not circumscribed by Victorian morality, Morris seems close to the spirit of Malory, who, far from making Guinevere grovel in repentance at Arthur's feet - as Tennyson does - comments on her love for Lancelot: "... while she lived she was a true lover and therefore she had a good end." (65) Morris's portrayal accentuates the heroic status she has in Le Morte d'Arthur. She is splendid in her pride, in her sensuous beauty, and in her defiance of her accusers: "Being such a lady could I weep these tears/ If this were true? A great queen such as I." (66)

(64) Mark Girouard : The Return to Camelot op.cit. pp.180-193

(65) Thomas Malory : Le Morte d'Arthur (This edition illus. by Aubrey Beardsley, published by Omega Books, Herts. 1985) Book XVIII Chapter 25 p.475

(66) William Morris : The Defence of Guinevere, and other Poems ed. Margaret A Lourie (Garland English Texts; Garland Publishing, New York 1981) p.49

Morris's Guinevere may have inspired Swinburne, who was also a member of the Pre-Raphaelite group, to his own creation of a proud, individualistic female hero. He chose Mary Queen of Scots as his subject, and, as this portrait of her given by Drury, one of her enemies, reveals, Swinburne was deeply moved by the heroic qualities that make her different from - and beyond - ordinary men and women:

Unmerciful, unfaithful, but of heart
 So fiery high, so swift of spirit and clear
 In extreme danger and pain so lifted up
 So of all things inviolable
 So large of courage, so superb of soul,
 So sheathed with iron mind invincible
 And arms unbreached of fireproof constancy -
 By shame not shaken, fear or force or death,
 ...
 She shall be a world's wonder to all time
 A deadly glory watched of marvelling men
 Not without praise, not without noble tears,
 And if without what she would never have
 Who had it never, pity - yet from none
 Quite without reverence and some kind of love
 For that which was so royal.

(67)

But, while remoter heroic ages and heroes stimulated a truly creative response in Victorian poets, they were generally less successful artistically when they promoted or reflected the chivalry of their own time. This is particularly noticeable in the latter part of the century, when the writings on chivalry took on a more didactic and moralistic character, due, in part, to the adoption of the chivalric code by the public schools as their inspiration and their rule. In a short time, the public school ethic came to be translated into the ethic of their adult world, and by the end of the century to be a gentleman one had to be chivalrous.

(67) Algernon Charles Swinburne : Mary Stuart (Chatto & Windus, London 1881) Act IV scene 2 pp.151-2

How much the Victorian public schools had adapted their version of chivalry so that it would fulfil the needs of the gentleman, who was now seen primarily as a servant of the Empire, is indicated in this contemporary comment by a well-known critic, Coulson Kernahan, on the role of the public school. He likens it to "the worshipped mother ... who teaches them not only to kneel in prayer, but also to kneel in order that they may learn to shoot straight, lest the call come to defend their country in an hour of need; who bids them not only in all things to play the man, but in life's battle-field, whether a battle-field only figuratively, or a battle-field in reality, to 'play the game'." (68)

The poet responsible for immortalising the phrase "playing the game" in the minds of generations of English schoolboys was Henry Newbolt, in a poem entitled 'Vitai Lampada'. The poem opens with an account of the closing moments of a school cricket match, where the last batsman is inspired:

... not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame
But his captain's hand on his shoulder smote -
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'

The second stanza is the really significant part of the poem, for it is here that the chivalry of the playing-field is carried triumphantly to the more testing situation of the battlefield:

The sand of the desert is sodden red,-
Red with the wreck of a square that broke;-
The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.

(68) Coulson Kernahan : Six Famous Living Poets (Thornton Butterworth, London 1922) p.106. (See intro. p.10. The article on Newbolt was originally in serial form, published ca. 1897.)

The river of death has brimmed his banks,
 And England's far, and Honour a name;
 But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:
 'Play up! play up! and play the game!'

(69)

One would suppose that the overt class prejudice of 'Vital Lampada' would have confined the poem's popularity and the influence of its ethic to those who experienced public school education. In fact, as mentioned above, 'Vital Lampada' and the large number of heroic poems like it had widespread acceptance, because chivalry had been made the basis of the code followed by such organizations as The Christian Socialists, The Boys' Brigade, and The Boy Scouts, which drew their members from the working and middle classes as well as the upper classes. Indeed, 'Vital Lampada', in the form of a tableau arranged by Baden-Powell, was put on at a public performance given by the Boy Scouts in 1908.

Kernahan's comments on the poem and its author - which are typical of the period (*) - are worthy of note here because they reveal how didactic considerations superseded completely, both in the writing and in the judging of verse of this nature, considerations of literary merit. What mattered was the imparting of lofty ideals, particularly that of patriotism, and it was unimportant even to a literary critic like Kernahan how hackneyed the means might be by which this was brought about. "Is there anything," he asks, "in the

* See the introductions to the numerous anthologies of heroic verse which appeared in this period: e.g. W E Henley's Lyra Heroica : "To set forth, as only art can, the beauty and the joy of living, the beauty and the blessedness of death, the glory of battle and adventure, the nobility of devotion - to a cause, an ideal, a passion even - the dignity of resistance, the sacred quality of patriotism, that is my ambition here." Author's preface p.vii

(69) Henry Newbolt : Collected Poems 1897-1907 (Nelson and Sons, London 1907) p.13

work of our younger poets which more fires one, more inspires one, and sets the youth of our England a more glorious standard than this? Whether as a poem or a call to patriotism, one may speak of it as 'direct' as a sword-thrust." (70) His summing-up of Newbolt's achievement as a poet is also on purely moral, not literary, grounds, and, one notes, is expressed in chivalric terms: "... he has 'uttered nothing base,' but that the purpose of all that he writes with serious intent is knightly, chivalrous, and noble." (71) From this passage it becomes evident that the lack of concern of the general public and the critics about the literary quality of patriotic poetry - a lack which annoyed Sorley and Rosenberg in 1915 when Brooke's 'soldier sonnets' had become popular - has a long-established precedent.

Predictably, the two major wars of Victoria's reign, the Crimean War (1853-1856) and the Boer War (1899-1902), injected a bellicose fervour into the more generalised injunctions to chivalrous behaviour which are to be found in the prose and poetry of the time. Tennyson, his mind set alight by the Arthurian material on which he had been working, could view the British embarkation on the war against Russia in the Crimea as an ennobling venture not unlike the quest for the Holy Grail:

... so I wake to the higher aims
Of a land that has lost for a little her lust of gold,
And love of a peace that was full of wrongs and shames,
Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be told;
And hail once more to the banner of battle unrolled!
(72)

(70) Coulson Kernahan : op.cit. p.107

(71) *ibid.*

(72) Alfred Tennyson (Lord) : 'Maud' Part IV in The Works of Tennyson
ed. Hallam Tennyson (London n.p. 1910) p.228

The lack of realism in this attitude becomes most obvious, however, when he moves from rousing rhetoric to a contemplation of the cannons, which he personifies as the Spirit of the War:

[No more shall] the cannon bullet rust on a slothful
shore
And cobweb woven across the cannon's throat
Shall shake its threaded tears in the wind no more.
(73)

The unpleasant combination of sentiment with a weapon of war becomes even more offensive when he visualizes the cannon-fire at Sebastopol and on the shores of the Black and the Baltic Seas:

And now by the side of the Black and Baltic deep,
And dreadful-grinning mouths of the fortress, flames
The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire.
(74)

Jon Silkin comments: "For a major poet, 'blood-red blossom' subsuming blood within the image of blossom, is hardly the most credible or truthful image ..." (75) One is struck too by the hectic nature of the language in this whole section - by what amounts to a bombardment of emotive words.

When Tennyson took notice of the reports that Russell was sending back to 'The Times', he wrote altogether differently. Russell's graphic descriptions of the appalling mishandling of the war by the British generals, the devastating effects of cholera and dysentery, and the nightmarish hospitals at Scutari had the effect of silencing most poets, whose minds were fixed on the sort of battle fought by Sir Walter Scott's heroes. As Poet Laureate, Tennyson could not continue to

(73) Alfred Tennyson (Lord) : 'Maud' Part IV p.229

(74) *ibid.*

(75) Jon Silkin : Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War
(OUP London 1972) p.27

ignore Russell's reports, as he had in 'Maud', nor could he ignore the public's expectation that he would provide them with a boost to their morale. Ironically, he found his opportunity in one of the saddest bumbles of the Crimean War, the charge of the Light Brigade against the main force of the Russian guns at Sebastopol.

Writing a few minutes after reading Russell's report of the charge, Tennyson produced a poem which turns a military disaster into a celebration of the magnificent discipline of the British soldier. The outstanding features of the exploit were the perfect order in which the Light Brigade moved down the valley despite the terrible cross-fire, and the ferocity of the charge itself at the Russian guns; and these features Tennyson conveys vividly by the rhythm, which echoes the beat of the horses' hooves trotting, then galloping down the valley, by the simple, compelling language, and by the repetition. There are few poems in English literature that contain more of the excitement of battle.

An interesting addendum to 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' and the genre of heroic poetry which it represents is provided by Malvern van Wyk Smith, disturbing the impression that the Crimean War was treated only heroically. After praising Tennyson's poem, which he regards as a masterpiece, "the lineal descendant of 'The Battle of Maldon'" and "probably the last great battle-piece that could be written in English", van Wyk Smith goes on to say:

The glamour of 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' has obscured poetry of a very different kind which the Crimean War produced. Public hysteria after the revelations of Florence Nightingale and greater knowledge of conditions at the front moved some poets to frame a vision of war as futile horror and individual disaster.

One of the poems which he cites to illustrate this different vision of war, 'The Due of the Dead' by W M Thackeray, is striking because it bears so strong a resemblance to the war poems of Siegfried Sassoon, in its use of ironic contrast between cant at home and slaughter at the front:

[His socialites] in smooth dinner-table phrase,
Twixt soup and fish, discuss the fight;
Give to each chief his blame or praise;
Say who was wrong and who was right.

...
Meanwhile o'er Alma's bloody plain
The scathe of battle has rolled by -
The wounded writhe and groan - the slain
Lie naked staring to the sky.

(77)

Van Wyk Smith's remarks on the Crimean War are part of a prelude to his main theme, which is that the South African War "marked the clear emergence of the kind of war poetry which we have come to associate almost exclusively with World War I." (78) Drummer Hodge, the superbly researched and written study of the poetry of the South African War, is the result of this thesis, which sprang from his apprehension that war provokes a diversity of attitudes. Because a large number of *literate* men fought in or were concerned about that conflict, it was probable that all of these diverse attitudes would be articulated during the period of the war, from 1899 to 1902.

Of the several fine poems from the South African War which van Wyk Smith has brought to our notice, one of the most surprising, considering his rampantly imperialistic writing before the war, is

(76) Malvern van Wyk Smith : Drummer Hodge : The Poetry of the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902 (Oxford University Press, London 1978) p.12 and p.13

(77) W M Thackeray : 'The Due of the Dead' *Punch*, 28 Oct 1854 ~

(78) van Wyk Smith : op.cit. p.***

Newbolt's 'Waggon Hill'. This poem concerns an engagement of three companies of Devons under Colonel Ian Hamilton which took place near Ladysmith on 5 January 1900. The Devons held the Platrand ridge against double the number of Boers, and, eventually, after sixteen hours of desperate fighting in torrential rain and wind, beat them off. In the lines below, Newbolt conveys the terrible effort and fortitude of the Devons in this battle by the use of bleak storm images and by the number of words which suggest extreme muscular tension. The regular rhythm enhances the effect of the images, for it suggests a sense of the perfect discipline of the men, who went into attack after attack. The concluding allusion to Drake is appropriate and evocative, setting this modern feat of courageous endurance in the context of a long heroic tradition, much as David Jones was to do in In Parenthesis:

Valour of England gaunt and whitening,
 Far in a South land brought to bay,
 Locked in a death-grip all day tightening,
 Waited the end in twilight gray.
 Battle and storm the sea-dog's way!
 Drake from his long rest turned again,
 Victory lit thy steel with lightning,
 Devon, O Devon, in wind and rain!

(79)

For van Wyk Smith, the most important poem of the South African War is 'Drummer Hodge'. It serves as "the masthead" of his study because it is "a full and profoundly moving record of the humanitarian response to war" (80), which he believes emerged to a significant extent for the first time in the poetry of that conflict.

(79) Henry Newbolt : Collected Poems 1897-1907 (Thomas Nelson, London 1908) p.141

For an account of the incident, see Thomas Pakenham : The Boer War (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg 1979) pp.275-6

(80) van Wyk Smith : op.cit. p.146

The hero of the poem is an unknown young soldier whose death is so unremarkable that to his fellow men it is merely a matter of hasty disposal of the body:

They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest
 Uncoffined - just as found:
 His landmark is a kopje crest
 That breaks the veldt around;
 And foreign constellations west
 Each night above his mound.

Young Hodge the Drummer never knew -
 Fresh from his Wessex home -
 The meaning of the broad Karoo,
 The Bush, the dusty loam,
 And why uprose to nightly view
 Strange stars amid the gloam.

Yet portion of that unknown plain
 Will Hodge forever be;
 His homely Northern breast and brain
 Grow to some Southern tree,
 And strange-eyed constellations reign
 His stars eternally.

(81)

The casual, impersonal nature of Hodge's burial, established by the use of a pronoun to refer to other soldiers and the use of the word 'throw' at the beginning of the poem, contrasts with the very different treatment which nature accords his body. The monuments that she gives him, the kopje and the stars, are immeasurably grander than anything which man can raise to his heroes, and thus Hodge, unhonoured and forgotten, is apotheosized. The heroic transformation of Hodge is admirably done, because, by the stark reality of the first two lines, the insistence on his homeliness, and the concreteness of the imagery, Hardy has brought a veracity which underlies the more elevated parts of the poem and allows them their full emotive force.

'Drummer Hodge' is the finest war poem in the stream of anti-imperialist and pacifist poetry that the liberal and humanitarian

movements of the nineteenth century inspired. It compares closely and favourably with another fine and deceptively simple poem, 'Futility', written by Wilfred Owen in 1917. The starting point in 'Futility' is, also, the death in battle of a young soldier from a rural background, and again nature, not man, is the compassionate force: "Move him into the sun - / Gently its touch awoke him once, ..." (82). It is in the second half of 'Futility' that one sees how the sensibilities of the two poets diverge. Like Hardy, Owen gradually invests the comforting nature image with a cosmic grandeur, to reveal the symbolic significance of this single death; but whereas the constellations proclaim the heroism of Hodge and that of all seemingly insignificant men caught in the cataclysmic experience of war, Owen's image of the sun waking the cold earth only emphasizes the tragic destruction of life, and of the whole evolutionary process it represents. The difference between the vision of Hardy and that of Owen in this instance is not necessarily an indication of a significant difference in response between the poets of the South African War and those of the First World War which was dictated by the dissimilar circumstances of the two wars. As was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the ability to present without sentimentality the harsh realities of war and the heroic potential of human behaviour, as shown by Hardy in 'Drummer Hodge', is a good deal more common in the poetry of the First World War than has hitherto been acknowledged. In the particular context of the present study, the 'Drummer Hodge vision' is found in a fully developed form in The Middle Parts of Fortune. Moreover, Manning's apprehension of the "primitive passions" and "broad simplicity" of the troops whom he portrays in his novel is so reminiscent of Hardy's novels that one wonders whether Hardy's poetry

(82) Wilfred Owen : The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen

ed. C Day Lewis (Chatto & Windus, London 1971) p.58

and prose did exert any direct influence on Manning, but against this is the fact that although Manning does mention many other writers who influenced him, he never mentions Hardy. More significantly, Hardy's vision of war in 'The Dynasts', his vast later poem of the Napoleonic Wars, is wholly unlike that of Manning.

One might well expect Rosenberg to have been impressed by the scope and originality of 'The Dynasts' and Hardy's South African War poems, as they appear to confirm Rosenberg's belief that war "should be approached in a colder way, more abstract, with less of the million feelings everybody feels; or all these should be concentrated in one distinguished emotion." (83) However, the remarks he makes about Hardy reveal little admiration of his work: "Hardy I think is a better poet than novelist", (84) he wrote - scant praise when one recalls that he had, a few years before, dismissed the novels as being "dreadfully realistic". (85)

Possibly, also, Rosenberg and Manning shared Sorley's opinion that Hardy had discredited himself as a poet by writing poems at the outbreak of the First World War which Sorley considered to be untrue and no more than patriotic cant. In November 1914, Sorley wrote:

Curiously enough, I think that 'Men Who March Away' is the most arid poem in the book, besides being untrue of the sentiments of the ranksmen going to war: 'Victory crowns the just' is the worst line he ever wrote - filched from the

(83) Isaac Rosenberg : Letter to Mrs Cohen, undated ca. January 1916, in Collected Works p.237

(84) Isaac Rosenberg : Letter to Mr Schiff, August 1916, op.cit. p.240

(85) Isaac Rosenberg : in 'Essay on a Door Knocker', op.cit. p.274

leading article in the 'Morning Post' and unworthy of him who had always previously disdained to insult Justice by offering it a martial crown like Victory.

(86)

The disillusionment with Hardy as a poet of the war, as expressed here by Sorley, may help to explain why Robert Nichols told Julian Tennyson in 1940 that his generation of war poets (the young poets of 1914-1918) had no "tough war literature" to prepare them for the experience of the warfare which they were to encounter nor to guide them in their own expression of it: "Our world was a pre-Hemingway world. Not only was there no tough war literature, there was no immediately contemporary tough literature at all. ... Books about spies were about as close as we got." (87)

More recently, Paul Fussell has explored this pre-Hemingway world of the 1914-1918 war and has pointed out that "an astonishing number took literature seriously." (88) Unlike the state of affairs in the later part of this century, English literature was not then regarded as belonging only to the intellectual or the aesthete, but was very near "the center of experience" (88) for most literate people. There was, moreover, a very real but quite unpretentious consciousness of a national literary canon that stretched back to Old English poetry and included not only the works of great English writers but those of Ancient Greece and Rome (*) as well. Thus, without affectation, can Owen use a quotation from Horace to entitle and end his powerful poem '*Dulce et Decorum Est*', Read use Wordsworth's 'Happy Warrior' - which

(86) Charles Hamilton Sorley : Letters (Cambridge n.p. 1919)

(87) Robert Nichols ed.: Anthology of War Poetry 1914-1918
(Nichol and Watson, London 1943) Preface, p.31

(88) Paul Fussell : The Great War and Modern Memory
(Oxford University Press, New York 1975)
See the Chapter : 'Oh What a Literary War' pp.155-190

he inverts in his own poem with devastating ironic effect, and Rosenberg compare a modern platoon of marching soldiers to the soldiers of Imperial Rome.

Because literature from the past tends in the latter part of the twentieth century to be regarded as a topic for study rather than as a vivid part of life, it is hard for us to realize that, in 1914, passages from, say, The Iliad had all the force of contemporary writing and were as present to the consciousness of the reading public. It is, nevertheless, essential that we do understand this, particularly in the context of this study where, more than with other writers of the period, a sense of literary history and myth is integral to the response to war of Rosenberg, Manning and Jones. The degree to which works from the past are woven into the fabric of their poetry and prose varies. Jones's method is by far the most densely allusive of the three, while Rosenberg and Manning use the past less intimately, as an inspiration and as a metaphor for their apprehension of the war.

Earlier, it was stated that those heroic works from the sixth to the nineteenth century examined in this chapter provide both a sense of the tradition to which the First World War poetry and prose of Rosenberg, Jones and Manning properly belong and an idea of the heroic material which inspired and influenced them. The emphasis must be on *idea*, because, as will become evident, such a survey cannot hope to comprehend all the works that may have had a significant bearing on the way in which the three central figures of this study wrote about war.

CHAPTER 2

Isaac Rosenberg: Part OneThe Development of an Heroic Vision

Of the three writers, Manning, Jones and Rosenberg, it is easiest to understand why Rosenberg should have developed so original a poetic vision, that differs markedly from both the more conventional one evinced by Brooke, and from the fiercely pacifist one of the trench poets later in the war. Unlike Manning and Jones, whose home and social circumstances were too comfortable to engender feelings of dissatisfaction with the social and literary *status quo*, in the period before the First World War everything about Rosenberg's desperately hard circumstances promoted a reaction against established usage, as well as the formation of an independent outlook at an early stage of his development as a poet.

Rosenberg's patron, Edward Marsh, used to refer to Rosenberg as "poor little Rosenberg", and certainly he appears to have faced a multitude of disadvantages. He was impoverished, uneducated in the conventional sense as he was forced to leave school at fourteen, he was brought up in an overcrowded, ugly house in a grim street in the East End of London, and he was the son of newly emigrant Jews from Russia. Such people were avoided even by the Jews in England, who had no wish to be ranked with the Jews from Eastern Europe who flooded into the country in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Adding to these difficulties of circumstance was the fact that Rosenberg had little charm of manner, and was not particularly attractive physically, being very short, and with prominent facial

features. It is interesting to note that Mark Gertler, a fellow student of Rosenberg at the Slade School of Art, shared an almost identical situation, but managed, through his romantic good looks, charm, and conversation, to make his being Jewish and his East End locale seem exotic and exciting. So well did he do this that he was befriended by Lady Ottoline Morell, one of the social and literary personalities of the time.

The culmination of Rosenberg's misfortune was that he was unable to find any employment after he had left the Slade, and had returned from a visit to his sister in South Africa in 1915. It was the misery of being moneyless and without prospects that finally drove Rosenberg to put aside his rather indecisive pacifism, and join up. "I never joined the army for patriotic reasons", he wrote to Edward Marsh. "Nothing can justify war. I suppose we must fight to get the trouble over. Anyhow, before the war I helped out when I could and I did other things to keep going. I thought if I'd join, there would be a separation allowance for my mother." (1) One realizes the extent of Rosenberg's desperation when one considers that a private's pay was seven shillings and sixpence a week, with an additional allowance of sixteen and six paid to his family.

When one can separate oneself from the sadness of this frustrated life, that ended near Arras in a futile raid on 1 April 1918, one can see that, in fact, it equipped him better than any other poet to write the poetry of the Great War. It is thus worth pausing to examine the advantages presented by Rosenberg's circumstances.

(1) Isaac Rosenberg : The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg
ed. Ian Parsons (OUP New York 1979) p.227

The chief advantage that Rosenberg had over the other trench poets was that he only partially shared their Edwardian and Georgian literary background. The few examples given (in the preceding chapter) of heroic and imperialist verse from this period indicate that poetry of this type was both contrived and effete. Generally speaking, much the same faults can be found with other Edwardian and Georgian poetry. It was a "period of very low vitality for poetry" (2), produced by poets who, as John H Johnston has put it, were timid, self-conscious, conservative, and lacking in originality and genuine imaginative power. Far from "English poetry putting on a new strength and beauty" (3), as Edward Marsh proclaimed in his introduction to the first volume of Georgian Poetry in 1912, it was retrenching and cutting itself off from the mainspring of contemporary life. Its favourite theme was the English countryside, but it is essentially a restricted view, that does not emanate from a deep knowledge of rural life. As well as rural lyrics, the Georgians wrote a great deal of wistful neo-romantic verse and narrative poems, that mostly reveal a nostalgia for past, more colourful times.

Rosenberg, as his remarks about Brooke indicate, was keenly aware of his contemporaries, and was himself attracted to the Georgian version of the romantic tradition; but, fortunately for his development as a poet, he had other powerful formative influences that helped him establish an original poetic sensibility.

(2) Cecil Day Lewis : A Hope for Poetry (Reprint with a Postscript)
(Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1936) p.2

(3) Edward Marsh (ed.) : Georgian Poetry 1911-1912 (The Poetry Bookshop, London 1912) Prefatory note.

The most powerful of these influences was his boyhood immersion in orthodox Jewish faith and culture. Something of the nature of this early religious experience can be glimpsed from William Rothenstein's description of his visit to the Spitalfields synagogue in Whitechapel, which Rosenberg and his father attended. It emphasizes the intense and mystical quality of the life of the Jewish emigrés from Russia and Galicia, and, incidentally, highlights the gulf between them and the established English Jews:

My surprise was great to find the place crowded with Jews draped in praying shawls; while in a dark-panelled room sat old, bearded men with strange side-locks, bending over great books and rocking their bodies as they read; others stood, muttering Hebrew prayers, their face to the wall, enveloped from head to foot in black bordered shawls ...

The Jews I saw were suspicious of strangers; they had lately come from Galicia, and were fanatically strict; so strict that they rejected the authority of the Chief Rabbi who, in their eyes, was unorthodox.

(4)

Until his late teens, Rosenberg participated fully in the worship, teachings, and ceremonies of this community. In addition to regular attendance at the synagogue, he had daily instruction in Hebrew and Judaic law at the Chedar (a boys' school run by the Rabbi in the late afternoon). When he was twenty-two he rebelled against the stern, authoritarian God of his people, but it was a rebellion and not a rejection. He never doubted the existence of God or his power; nor did he cease to be stirred by the history and the traditions of the Jews. The significance of this religious and cultural grounding of Rosenberg must be stressed, for, at a time when English poetry was drawing into itself and becoming increasingly confined to 'poetic' areas, Rosenberg was provided with a limitless source of symbol and metaphor from the Torah, Judaic tradition, and a sense of a structured existence

(4) William Rothenstein : Men and Memories: The Recollections of William Rothenstein 1900-1922 (Faber & Faber, London 1932) p.35

dominated by a powerful God. More than anything else these gave him a means of conveying in his poetry the huge destructive power of war, and engendered his unique view of the soldiers caught up in the conflict. Unlike the majority of the trench poets, Rosenberg did not regard the soldiers as victims, and thus he did not see his role as a war poet to be their mouthpiece, as Owen and Sassoon did.

Another important contributing factor to Rosenberg's original poetic vision was his lack of formal education. His leaving school at fourteen certainly was nothing out of the ordinary in Whitechapel, where the majority of boys were expected to help supplement the family's income as soon as they had completed elementary school. It seems, however, that their traditions of religion and culture inculcated in many of them favourable attitudes towards further study and the development of artistic talent. Rosenberg was one of a number of young working-class Jews who frequented the Whitechapel library and art gallery in the evenings and over weekends, and who gathered into informal groups that shared an interest in the writing of poetry and prose, in art and in reading. Rosenberg was fortunate enough to have been befriended by three young men who were as passionately interested in poetry and art as he was. As well as this valuable stimulation from his own age group, he had informed guidance and friendship from several older people who recognized that he had considerable talent, and who sympathized with his intensity and dedication. It was the artist J S Amshewitz who introduced Rosenberg to these people, as he pointed out in 1936:

It was in my studio that he met most of the friends that figure in this book [the Collected Works] and who influenced his life - the late Dr. Eder, Miss Seaton, whose literary knowledge and kindly criticism helped and encouraged him, and Michael Sherbrooke, the well-known actor who gave recitals of his poetry.

Rosenberg, armed with a sheaf of his drawings, had originally been taken to see Amsheiwitz when he was ten. It was the beginning of an important, but often difficult friendship, to judge by Amsheiwitz's comments on Rosenberg's personality:

He was a strange mixture of extreme modesty and assertiveness - factors which made him difficult and led to the estrangement of many of his best friends and to disaster as a student. Yet there was an odd kind of charm in his manner, and looking back, I realize how terribly sincere he was in his enthusiasms, and his apparently uncouth manner and lack of appreciation of his true friends was due to his own reaction to circumstances that were not always of his own seeking.

(6)

This association with a variety of people interested in many different aspects of art and poetry encouraged the development of a much more far-ranging and individual view of literature than was common among the more conventionally educated literary young men of his day. Something of this can be gathered from the account of one of his contemporaries, Joseph Ascher, of his experience of Rosenberg's poetry and of his criticism in 1911. Ascher also frequented the Whitechapel library, but his parents had sufficient means to send him to London University:

Very occasionally I saw flimsy scraps of paper with poems of his and like most of our group, I thought the poems strange and irregular and some of the language far-fetched, overbold. I remember in one he spoke about "the music of a smile", which at that time seemed a strange combination of words. The truth is that we had had at school and were still having at the University a very formal academic training and knew little about modern trends. I wrote some verse myself which Isaac pronounced "derivative" and "traditional".

(7)

(5) J H Amsheiwitz : Lecture given in South Africa, reported in The Zionist Record, 27 November 1937

(6) *ibid.*

(7) Joseph Ascher : in a letter to Jean Liddiard, quoted in J Liddiard The Half Used Life (Gollancz, London 1975) p.44

Apart from the stimulation of argument and of the exchange of views, Rosenberg's friendships led him to poetry not widely read before the First World War. It was Miss Winefreda Seaton who introduced him to the work of Donne, Marlowe, and Ben Jonson, and it was these poets in particular who helped to confirm his dissatisfaction with the safety and small scale of Edwardian and Georgian verse. What he responded to ardently was their ambition and breadth of mind, as this revelation of the way he was thinking in 1912 bears witness:

... Marlowe foreshadows Nietzsche. Tamburlaine, the towering colossus, symbolises the subjection of matter to the will - the huge blind forces of nature sink terrorised before this indomitable energy of purpose, clay for some colossal plastic shaping.

We of this age stand in the same relation to things as they.

(8)

It is significant that, even though this passage comes from an article entitled 'The Slade and Modern Culture' that Rosenberg was writing, it is in his poetry rather than in his painting that one senses the creative excitement that he is expressing here. His poetry of this period is raw and emotional, and has a deeply restless and disturbing quality not found in his art, which, despite its talent, tends to be too circumscribed by conventional influences. Possibly this was because he sold most of his paintings and drawings, and this inhibited his experimenting and embracing the new developments in art that were taking place. He did make some moves towards Cubism, but on the whole his painting style leans towards the Pre-Raphaelite or Post-Impressionist.

The question of how far Rosenberg was from finding his own style in art is not of concern here; but what is of interest and importance is how much his long and formal training in Fine Art affected his poetry. Rosenberg attended night classes at the Birbeck School of Art from 1907 to 1911, and was a full-time student at the Slade from 1911 to 1913. Over that lengthy period, certain of his faculties would have been so heightened and developed that his way of visualizing and working in poetry would be very different from that of someone who had not undergone such a training.

In the first place, the artist's training in observation would have sharpened and altered Rosenberg's perception, making it different from that of an untrained person. As well as noticing fine gradations in shape, colour, and texture ignored by the untrained eye, Rosenberg would have been schooled to see and to reproduce visual reality. Secondly, the training in design would have brought about in him a sharpened awareness of the whole structure of a poem, and the necessity of being able to see the relationships of its different parts. Thirdly, the practice of using a variety of techniques to convey visual and textural effects would have impressed on him the need for learning and devising comparable techniques in poetry. The effects of these particular aspects of his training in art are apparent in much of what he wrote, and will be discussed fully in the examination of his poems; but, overall, the importance of his years at the Birbeck and at the Slade lies in his finding poetry in subject matter not considered by any other war poet except David Jones; in the boldness and freedom of his style and his use of form; and in his sensitive awareness of pattern and colour.

The mixture of pity and disparagement in Edward Marsh's reference to Rosenberg quoted above reveals that their relationship was very far from being the easy, friendly one that Marsh had with most of his other protégés. Unlike Brooke, Sassoon, Graves, Manning, and even Gertler, Rosenberg was never invited to Marsh's breakfasts or luncheons and private poetry readings at the Poetry Bookshop, and thence into fashionable Georgian literary and artistic circles. If he had been, it seems likely that he would have been strongly influenced by the Georgian movement, for he showed an inclination to emulate two Georgians he admired, Lascelles Abercrombie and Gordon Bottomley. Fortunately, both these poets were perceptive enough to recognize Rosenberg's talent and originality, and urged him instead to continue to establish his own voice and style.

Of the one hundred and twenty poems which Rosenberg wrote before he enlisted in 1915, it is those that reflect his relationship with God and Judaism that are of the most significance in the study of his war poetry. As was pointed out above, it was his early immersion in the Torah that equipped him with a reservoir of material analogous to the situations which he encountered on the Western Front. In addition, through his channelling much of his intellectual energy into vast and complex subjects such as the nature of God and man's relationship with God, he established a scale in his habits of mind which enabled him to deal effectively with the scale of the war.

Rosenberg's earliest extant poems, that date from his mid-teens, reveal an enthusiastic and orthodox commitment to God and Judaism, and this survived until he was twenty-two. 'Ode to David's Harp', written when he was fifteen, is a lament for the lost splendours of Zion, but implied is the belief that the fall from grace was

deservedly punished, and that a time will come when the martial honour of Judah will be restored:

The harp that faster caused to beat
 The heart that throbbed for war,
 The harp that melancholy calmed
 Lies mute on Judah's shore.
 One chord awake - one strain prolong
 To wake the zeal in Israel's breast;
 ... (9)

In keeping with the traditional view of the fall of Israel was his conception of God as a merciful and loving deity, who would uplift the wretched. This picture remained substantially unchanged into his manhood, for in 1912, at the age of twenty-two, he asserts the benevolence of God in a particularly fervent manner in his first long poem, 'Night and Day'. He saw this benevolence expressed in natural beauty, as one can see by his calling Nature "the voice of God", and he believed it good to return this bountiful shower in the form of praise, thereby completing "the cycle of eternal rhythm."

It is interesting to note how caught Rosenberg's imagination was by the martial images of the Torah and Jewish history, even in this celebration of God and nature. Day is portrayed as a great war-horse, whose hooves have trampled the night to dust. The energy of this image of day is enhanced by verbs that imply fierce forward movement: 'broken', 'rushing', 'flung open', 'leaped', and 'smote'. In the following verse, the image of the war-horse is enlarged to include the pageantry of a mounted company moving into battle:

The banners of the day flame from the east.
 Its gorgeous hosts assail the heart of dreams.
 They brush aside the strange and cowed priest

 Their noising stirs the waking veils of thought,
 Ah! I am in the midst of their bright press. (10)

The use of the chivalric term 'press' suggests that Rosenberg's response to the heroic image was not confined to those he would have encountered in the Torah. His early painting reveals that he was drawn emotionally to the Pre-Raphaelites, so it is likely that he would have shared their love of chivalry. The notion of God as the fount of all man's joy began to be superseded later in 1913 by the conception of an oppressive and even malevolent Deity, who sought to crush man's joy and spirit. This change in attitude to the Almighty had been preceded by a growing confidence in his own creative powers, powers that he no longer regarded as an emanation of divine power. The poem 'Aspiration' is the earliest assertion of this new-found independence, and, as the lines below reveal, it was accompanied by a feeling of creative excitement and pent-up energy. (The metaphors for his aspiration are "a ghost enleaguer'd city" and "a rose within the mirror with the fragrance of it hid") :

I would crash the city's ramparts, touch the ghostly hands
without.
Break the mirror, feel the scented warm lit petals of the rose.
Would mine ears be stretched for shadows in the fading of the
doubt?
Other ears shall wait my shadow, - can you see behind the brows?

For I would see with mine own eyes the glory and the gold.
With a strange and fervid vision see the glamour and the dream.
And chant an incantation in a measure new and bold,
And enaureole a glory round an unawaken'd theme.
(11)

A year later, the longing for the fulfilment of his creative powers had taken more definite shape, for in 'The Poet II' (1913), he conceived his role, and that of every poet, to be prophet, seer, and teacher. Only the poet can break down the barriers to knowledge that the world erects, and bring about a wider awareness:

(10) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.33

(11) Rosenberg: op.cit. p.43

He takes the glory from the gold
 For consecration of the mould,
 He strains his ears to the clouds' lips,
 He sings the song they sang to him
 And his brow dips
 In amber that the seraphim
 Have held for him and hold.

So shut in are our lives, so still,
 That we see not of good or ill -
 A dead world since ourselves are dead.
 Till he, the master, speaks and lo!
 The dead world's shed,
 Strange winds, new skies and rivers flow
 Illumined from the hill.

(12)

The high purpose that Rosenberg accords the poet, one who through his insight and powers has the ability to transform the lives of other men, suggests that he was evolving for himself a new and dynamic definition of man. In this poem, he has taken from God the very power he celebrates in 'Night and Day'. As Jean Liddiard writes of his attitude of mind at this stage of his life:

He is equipped and ready to do battle with the God of his fathers; the creative powers of the poet challenge the power of the Creator. This constantly recurs, light-heartedly in the love poems, grandly in the plays, darkly in the war poems. So his heroes become Promethean and in the case of Moses highly unorthodox!

(13)

The provocatively titled poem, 'Invisible, Ancient Enemy of Mine', is Rosenberg's first direct attack on the God of his fathers. There is in this poem no vestige of belief in a benign deity, and, far from having the Orthodox Jew's acceptance that the hardship and misery that his ancestors endured and that the Jews continue to endure were a divine and just corrective, Rosenberg sees God only as malevolent to man. He feels that Jehovah took a malicious joy in

(12) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.53

(13) Jean Liddiard : Isaac Rosenberg : The Half Used Life (Gollancz, London 1975) p.137

choosing the Jews and vaunting them, because in so doing He makes their fall harder for them to bear. Such a view of God undermines His status, and in the following lines it is further reduced, by the reinforcements of the implications of the title that His attacks are clandestine and cowardly, and that He is a liar - "the coward striker in the pit-lined dark".

The result of this original portrayal of a monstrous God is, as one would expect, to make the reader sympathize with man, His victim; but what is not quite so expected is that man is not portrayed as being pitiful in this unequal struggle. He has an heroic largeness of spirit and a fieriness, evident in his desire to amass all the pain of the world in himself in an effort to cheat the enemy of his triumph:

When I had bowed
I felt your smile, when my large spirit groaned
And hid its fire
Because another spirit leaned on it,
I knew you near.

O that the tortured spirit could amass
All the world's pains,
How I would cheat you, leaving none for life,
... (14)

'God' (1915), the poem that has often been cited to show Rosenberg's originality and poetic maturity before he went to war, is the culmination of his conception of a sly and spiteful God. In this poem, all the anger and bitterness, that have been simmering in the earlier poems, boil over. The opening description in particular startles, for there is no sparing of effort to make God appear as evil and as revolting as possible:

In his malodorous brain what slugs and mire,
 Lanthorned in his oblique eyes, guttering burned!
 His body lodged a rat where men nursed souls.
 The world flashed grape-green eyes of a foiled cat
 To him. On fragments of an old shrunk power,
 On shy and maimed, on women wrung awry,
 He lay, a bullying hulk, to crush them more.
 But when one, fearless, turned and clawed like bronze,
 Cringing was easy to blunt those stern paws,
 And he would weigh the heavier on those after.

(15)

The sinister nature of this horrible being is conveyed by the slow, outward movement of the verse, from the ugly contents of the brain to the oblique eyes, and from the rat soul to the massive body. The effect of this deliberate discovering of the body is to emphasize its weight, which, as the second half of the verse reveals, is its chief means of crushing man. Contrast too is used expertly to bring out its menace and horror, and at the same time to elevate man. In place of the immortal soul of man, it lodges a rat; the light that gutters in oblique eyes is evil and sinister, while the light from the eyes of man is flashing, direct, and defiant. The potency of this particular contrast also derives from use of the archaic "lanthorned", which increases the sinister effect, and from the original comparison of the eyes of rebellious man with the brilliance of the eyes of a cornered cat. Maintaining the cat image throughout the verse, Rosenberg uses it to convey the desperate but heroic resistance of man, and this too is offset by the bullying, cowardly tactics of God, who crushes the weak and defenceless, but cringes from direct attack.

The subject of the second verse is the impossibility of man's ever besting God, because God has the power to turn men's strength, beauty, and wealth into weapons to be used against them:

Who rests in God's mean flattery now? Your wealth
 Is but his cunning to make death more hard.
 Your iron sinews take more pain in breaking.
 And he has made the market for your beauty
 Too poor to buy, although you die to sell.

(16)

Despite Rosenberg's weariness and bitterness over the inequality of the struggle, evident in the above lines and in the last verse, it is significant that he never quite loses his image of heroic man. The effect of this image of man pitting his strength and beauty against an overwhelming power is to impart a measure of dignity and poignancy to his stance, and, as has been mentioned earlier (*), this was to become central in Rosenberg's perception of man in war.

Another bold move in the direction of the unorthodox, and one that was also to become part of his vision of the war, was his image of a female god. He first had the notion of such a deity in a slight poem he wrote in 1912, entitled 'Lady You are My God', but by 1914 the half-humorous and fanciful compliment on the power of a woman's sexual attraction had developed into a conception of a god terrible in her predatory and insatiable desire to ensnare men:

We curl into your eyes,
 They drink our fires and have never drained.
 In the fierce forest of your hair
 Our desires beat blindly for their treasure.

In your eyes' subtle pit
 Far down, glimmer our souls.
 And your hair like massive forest trees
 Shadows our pulses, overtired and dumb.

Like a candle lost in an electric glare
 Our spirits tread your eyes' infinities.
 In the wrecking waves of your tumultuous locks
 Do you not hear the moaning of our pulses?

(17)

(*) see p.56

(16) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.94 (17) op.cit. p.70

The immense power of the Female God is established by the images that stress her consuming force, and, conversely, those images that bring out the weakness of man, and his inability to withstand her. The organization of the verses, with the first two lines being devoted to the power of her eyes, and the second pair of lines to the ensnaring effect of her hair, reinforces the effect of the imagery, as does the alliteration. Most important, however, is the fact that the imagery operates on both a sexual and a spiritual level. It was no doubt this, as well as the clear evidence of control, that emboldened Rosenberg to write to Marsh, when he sent him the poem from South Africa, "But this coming away has changed me marvellously, and makes me more confident and mature." (18)

Rosenberg's defining God in these unorthodox terms is in part a rebellion against the authoritarian God of his fathers and in part an attempt to formulate for himself a mythical structure which would enable him to cope poetically with powerful forces, which he felt deeply affected his life and the lives of others, but were beyond human control. It was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (*) that it was Rosenberg's practice before the War in grappling with huge and complex themes that enabled him to be one of the very few writers who were able to do more than deal with immediate events as they impinged upon the writers themselves. However, as Rosenberg himself was aware, he never achieved a fully coherent mythical structure, as David Jones did; but it is clear that he believed that, if he survived the war, he would be able to comprehend it in its entirety through myth.

(18) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.206 \

(*) see p.64

The fact that Rosenberg chose verse drama as a vehicle for expressing the scope and profundity of his later vision of war alerts one to the importance of his first, and only truly complete play, 'Moses', which he wrote at army training camp in 1915, and in the first months of 1916.

'Moses' is indeed important, for it is the culmination up to that time of Rosenberg's complex response to war, and it thus gives a very clear idea of his state of mind when he went out to the trenches. As has been seen from his early religious poems, and even from those reflecting his rebellion against God, he had imbibed much of the Hebraic heroic code, which places high value on the military virtues of strength, courage, prowess, and endurance, and this strongly influenced his view of the 1914-1918 conflict. By 1915, this view had become overlaid with other, some quite contrary views, but on the whole it remains at the core of his attitude.

Rosenberg's initial reaction to the outbreak of war, expressed in a poem he wrote in Cape Town, is, for instance, far from the ingenuous heroism of his youth and from the sentiments of most of the poets who wrote in 1914; but he retains the idea, inherent in 'David's Harp', that war is a great purging force. It will be recalled that Brooke had a similar view when he compared the rush to volunteer with "swimmers into cleanness leaping". The difference between Rosenberg's conception and Brooke's, however, lies in Rosenberg's more perfect awareness of the pain that such a purge will engender:

In all men's hearts it is.
Some spirit old
Hath turned with malign kiss
Our lives to mould.

Red fangs have torn His face.
God's blood is shed.

He mourns from His lone place
His children dead.

O! ancient crimson curse!
Corrode, consume.
Give back this universe
Its pristine bloom.

(19)

Rosenberg's second war poem of 1914 comes as something of a surprise, for in it there is no glimmer of the earlier sensitivity, and, in fact, it is given up wholly to an over-effusive celebration of heroes dead and about to die, conceived of in biblical heroic terms:

Flame out, you glorious skies,
Welcome our brave,
Kiss their exultant eyes;
Give what they gave.

Flash, mailed seraphim,
Your burning spears;
New days to outflame their dim
Heroic years.

Thrills their baptismal tread
The bright proud air;
The embattled plumes outspread
Burn upwards there.

(20)

Rosenberg's main critics (*) have ignored this poem, probably because it contradicts the maturer and more original view found in 'On Receiving News of the War', but in so doing they are presenting an impression of Rosenberg's outlook in 1914 and 1915 that is not wholly accurate, and, ultimately, ignores important factors in his trench poems. One can level a similar objection at their critical treatment of 'Moses', for despite there being a link in thought and feeling between

(19) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.75

(20) op.cit. pp.91-2

(*) See Bernard Bergonzi: Heroes' Twilight (1965);
Jon Silkin: Out of Battle (1972);
Desmond Graham: The Truth of War (1984).

this work and his war poems of 1914, and despite the fact that it too was written entirely in the training camps of Farnborough and Bury St. Edmunds, when Rosenberg's mind naturally was full of the war and of being a soldier, little attention has been paid to this play as an indication of his attitude to war before he went out to the trenches. "... the whole thing", Rosenberg wrote of 'Moses' to the poet and playwright R C Trevelyan, "was written in barracks, and I suppose you know what an ordinary soldier's life is like. Moses symbolises the fierce desire for virility, and original action in contrast to slavery of the most abject kind." (21) The frequent angry references Rosenberg makes, in his letters, to the bullying and oppression of his army training, and the proximity in the above passage of an "ordinary soldier's life" to his remarks on the significance of 'Moses' make it likely that he had his own situation in mind when he wrote about the misery of the Israelites in Egypt: over-worked, starved, and at the mercy of sadistic overseers. It also seems likely that the brilliantly energetic Moses, who will allow nothing to impede the accomplishment of his heroic purpose, is an expression of the frustrated and oppressed Rosenberg's own fierce desire. On a more objective level, Moses is the embodiment of the great purging force of war that Rosenberg had envisaged earlier - a force that is terrible in its ruthlessness and its corroding and consuming power, but ultimately, through the destruction of outworn and evil institutions, brings about a new order. With such a conception of Moses's symbolic significance, Rosenberg was bound to depart radically from the biblical representation of him, which depicts him as being the faithful servant of Jehovah, and a Jewish patriot who is deeply moved by the suffering of his countrymen.

(21) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.235

If Moses's heroic type is to be categorized, he belongs most clearly to the Classical, for, like the Greek heroes, he is prepared to cast aside all moral, social, and political restraints the moment they come between him and the achievement of his ambition. Moses is completely untroubled by his conscience and feelings of loyalty to the Pharaoh when he decides to revolt against Egypt, despite the king's regarding him as a beloved son and heaping honours upon him. (*) The biblical Moses arouses admiration when he kills the Egyptian overseer, because it is clear that this action proceeds from an overwhelming sympathy for his fellow Hebrews and anger at the brutality of the beating. In Rosenberg's play, Moses is unmoved by the overseer's beating an old Hebrew senseless, but decides to murder him when he learns that the overseer has information that would bring a speedy end to Moses's position as the Pharaoh's beloved son: the information that not only is Moses a Hebrew, but that he is still in close contact with the Hebrews, for he visits his sister every night. Koelue, his beautiful Egyptian mistress, has sacrificed wealth and reputation for him, but she too is thrown aside in pursuit of his grand design. Moreover, his bid to free the Israelites from their bondage to Egypt is solely because it coincides with his thirst for glory and action, and provides an escape from the boredom with the life of the Egyptian court. In fact, like Coriolanus, he regards those whom he must deliver with aristocratic distaste:

The rude touched heart of the mauled sweaty horde,
Their rough tongues fawn at my hands, their red streaked eyes
Glisten with sacrifice.

(22)

(22) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.140

* There is no mention in the Bible of Moses's becoming Pharaoh's favourite, as Rosenberg depicts him: see Exodus Chapter 3 verse 10.

Again in accordance with the old heroic spirit, he will acknowledge no dependence for his greatness on a superior power. He regards God merely as a cunning adversary, who attempts to delude men into thinking that he favours them because this makes the realization that he does not care for them all the harder for them to bear. As the emphasis on the second person in his comment on the poor old Hebrew's cry to the Messiah reveals, Moses believes that he has freed himself of God's wiles:

Ye who best God awhile, - O, hear, your wealth
Is but His cunning to make death more hard.
Your iron sinews take more pain in breaking.

(23)

In the discussion (*) of the original appearance of these lines in the poem 'God', it was suggested that they implied a deep sympathy for man and his futile but heroic stand against an overwhelming and cunning power, but in the context of this play they point rather to the pitilessness of Moses.

One of Rosenberg's achievements is that he manages to make this most ruthless and atavistic of heroes so attractive that the reader, caught by his vivid quality, suspends moral judgement of his behaviour. This is apparent from the first soliloquy, when the brilliant energy of his speech makes one accept his view of people as mere tools of his ambition:

Fine! Fine!
See in my brain
What madmen have rushed through,
And like a tornado
Torn up the tight roots
Of some dead universe.

(23) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.147

(*) See p.70

The old clay is broken
 For a power to soak in and knit
 It all into tougher tissues
 To hold life,
 Pricking my nerves till the brain might crack,
 It boils to my finger-tips,
 Till my hands ache to grip
 The hammer - the lone hammer
 That breaks lives into a road
 Through which my genius drives.

(24)

This speech brings home the audacity of the poet, for contrary to conventional rules of composition, he leaps from one unconnected image to another, so that there is no time for the reader to differentiate and deliberate in the breath-stopping rush. Far from being confusing in effect, however, the discreteness of the metaphors, combined with the densely packed kinetic verbs, and the movement and rhythmical pattern of the lines, serves to emphasize the creative energy that floods in on Moses. R G Anderson (25) has pointed to the influence of T E Hulme in this passage, and certainly its effect must be close to what Hulme sought in his 'Notes on Language and Style':

Style short, being forced by the coming together of many different thoughts, and generated by their contact. Fire struck between stones.

(26)

Moses's huge vitality, so striking in this opening passage, informs everything he says and does in the play, and it is chiefly this quality that sets him apart from other men. In common with other heroes, his pursuit of power is carried out with a single-minded intensity which, as has been seen, ignores the ties of loyalty,

(24) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works pp.138-9

(25) R G Andersen : Isaac Rosenberg: A Critical Study of His Plays and Poems (Ph.D. thesis University of Leicester, 1975)

(26) T E Hulme : Further Speculations ed. Sam Hynes (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln) p.80

position, and love. The lyrical beauty of the opening lines of the soliloquy, in which he reveals his intention to reject Koelue, suggest he felt for her a deep passion, but this is outshone by the fieriness and excitement of his greater love:

Ah! Koelue!

Had you embalmed your beauty, so
 It could not backward go,
 Or change in any way,
 What were the use, if on my eyes
 The embalming spices were not laid
 To keep us fixed,
 Two amorous sculptures passioned endlessly?
 ...
 Where yesterday soft hair through my fingers fell
 A shaggy mane would entwine,
 And no slim form work fire to my thighs.
 But human Life's inarticulate mass
 Throb the pulse of a thing
 Whose mountain flanks awry
 Beg my mastery - mine!
 Ah! I will ride the dizzy beast of the world
 My road - my way.

(27)

"Two amorous sculptures passioned endlessly" inevitably evokes memories of the lovers in 'Ode to a Grecian Urn', yet, far from being an expression of longing as it is in Keats's poem (for an eternal love), Rosenberg uses the image to point to the restricted nature of romantic love in comparison to the dynamism and limitlessness of a quest for power. This idea is enhanced by his metamorphosis of the succeeding images - her soft hair becomes the shaggy mane of a wild beast; her slender form the "dizzy beast of the world".

True to the traditional heroic boast, there is in this passage a dramatic assertion of the self. It is deeply stirring, for it is at this moment that the hero most clearly and forcibly displays his untrammelled heroic spirit. One is reminded again of Coriolanus, and the splendid bombast of his cry to the Volscians as they move to

destroy him:

If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I
Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli:
Alone I did it. - Boy!

(28)

As is the case with most heroes, all who come into contact with Moses are aware that he is different from other men, and this contact causes them, in various ways, to become his creatures. Despite the fury of her father, and the wealth of her Egyptian suitor Prince Imra, Koelue is powerless to resist the attraction of that "fierce unmanageable blood". The Pharaoh adores Moses, and is so much under his spell, that he misses him even in the short period when he slips out to visit Miriam: "And night by night at that same hour/ A king calls for his son in vain." The Old Hebrew has noted his aristocratic disdain and is angered by it, but his remarks on Moses reveal his recognition of his superiority and difference: "He is a prince, an animal/ Not of our kind", and when he hears Moses's voice, he is convinced it is the voice of the Messiah. Abinoah loathes Moses, and regards him merely as a Hebrew upstart who has ruined his daughter, but even he seems to become mesmerized by Moses, for, in the end, apparently fascinated by Moses's exposition of his grand design, he fails to realize that he is about to be strangled. It is, however, the young Hebrew who most clearly recognizes Moses's heroic quality, and conveys it in titanic terms:

He spoke! since yesterday
Am I not larger grown?
I've seen men hugely shapen in soul
Of such unhuman shaggy male turbulence
They tower in foam miles from our neck-strained sight.
And to their shop only heroes come.

But all were cripples to this speed
 Constrained to the stables of flesh.

(29)

Two heroic attributes - inspirational force, and superiority to ordinary men - are here expressed with great vitality in terms which reveal as well the speaker's excitement and awe. The passage reveals too, as indeed does most of this play, how developed was Rosenberg's craft by this time. The dramatic simplicity of "I spoke" and the rhetorical question, and the sure structuring of the lines to permit as powerful an impression as possible of the hero, are evidence of the poet's maturity.

What Moses has in mind is a complete revolution in human nature, a scheme of such dimensions and of such difficulty to be worthy of a hero. Untroubled by the problems that beset lesser men, he has the superb simplicity and directness of a great man: Egypt must be struck out, and recalcitrant temperaments must be transformed through the exercise of his will:

... could a miracle
 Destroy the dawn, night would be mixed with light,
 No night or light would be, but a new thing.
 So with these slaves who perhaps have dreamt of freedom,
 Egypt was in the way; I'll strike it out
 With my ways curious and unusual.
 I have a trouble in my mind for largeness,
 Rough-hearted, shaggy, which your grave ardours lack.
 Here is the quarry quiet for me to hew,
 Here are the springs, primeval elements,
 The roots' hid secrecy, old source of race,
 Unreasoned reason of the savage instinct.
 I'd shape one impulse through the contraries
 Of vain ambitious men, selfish and callous,
 And frail life drifters, reticent, delicate.
 ...

So grandly fashion these rude elements
 Into some newer nature, a consciousness
 Like naked light seizing the all-eyed soul,
 Oppressing with its gorgeous tyranny
 Until they take it thus - or die.

(31)

As the stage directions and the last line of this speech make clear, violence, in the immediate form of murdering Abinoah, and fighting Prince Imra's cohorts, who are coming to arrest him, is a prerequisite for the establishment of the Golden Age that Moses envisages here. This acceptance of violence as a means of achieving a great end strengthens the suggestion made above (*) that 'Moses', in several important ways, is a reflection of Rosenberg's apprehension of the War in 1915 and early 1916. The importance of the military context in which he wrote the play, and the relationship between his early view of war as a great purging force and Moses's very similar view of his own powers, have been discussed; but, in addition to these factors, one should consider the outlook on war that Rosenberg expresses to Schiff in a letter he wrote in November 1915, when he was immersed in 'Moses'. "One might succumb, be destroyed", he wrote, with reference to the enormous demands made on his spirit and body by the war, and the training for war, "but one might also (and the chances are even greater for it) be renewed, made larger, healthier." (32) This statement, echoed in several other letters(**), reflects Moses's vision of human nature being transformed, and life being given a new vigour of purpose, but in place of Moses's will, the demands of war have become the cathartic power. The statement thus reveals that Rosenberg saw an absolute value in the intense effort that war calls out and realized that not to succumb, not to crumble under the pressures of

(*) See p.74 and elsewhere.

(32) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works pp.221-2

(**) op.cit. see pp.239,248,257,264,270 etc.

war, "to use all one's sticking power" was in itself a form of heroism. At the time Rosenberg wrote this letter, he was at training camp, but it is obvious that he was not considering only the rigours of army training but was anticipating those of actual war experience.

The significance that Rosenberg finds in the effort which war exacts lies behind his presentation of marching soldiers in a poem which he wrote just prior to his being sent out to the trenches in June 1916. As the title 'Marching (As Seen From the Left File)' indicates, the soldiers are presented from the narrow viewpoint of one actually marching within the column; but by maintaining the rhythm and a control of his images, the poet moves to a wider consideration of the soldier in modern warfare:

My eyes catch ruddy necks
 Sturdily pressed back -
 All a red brick moving glint.
 Like flaming pendulums, hands
 Swing across the khaki -
 Mustard-coloured khaki -
 To the automatic feet.
 We husband the ancient glory
 In these bared necks and hands.
 Not broke is the forge of Mars;
 But a subtler brain beats iron
 To shoe the hoofs of death,
 (Who paws dynamic air now).
 Blind fingers loose an iron cloud
 To rain immortal darkness
 On strong eyes.

(33)

In the first verse, the emphasis on colour - on the brick-red of the necks and on the mustard-coloured khaki - combined with the feeling of strength that comes from necks being bare and sturdily pressed back, and from the regular rhythm, give an overall impression of vigorous male life and magnificent, disciplined movement. "Sturdily pressed back" suggests, too, the proud bearing of the men.

as soon as they encountered the shocking reality of trench warfare, Rosenberg's heroic perception is too firmly grounded in a grim awareness of the nature and the scale of modern war to be radically altered by his experience of the trenches.

(*) "The strain [Rosenberg suffered] is indicated by the fact that Owen's trench experience , despite its intense effect upon his mind and work, amounted to only five months and that as an officer."

CHAPTER 3

Isaac Rosenberg: Part TwoHusbanding the Ancient Glory in an Unheroic War

The examination, at the end of the last chapter, of the poetry that Isaac Rosenberg wrote from August 1914 to June 1916 in response to the war, has revealed that his apprehension of the conflict was mature and far-reaching. He foresaw, better than most poets at the outset of the war, the enormity of the destructive forces that had been unleashed and what suffering would ensue, and he realized, too, the inappropriateness and inadequacy of the conventional heroic response as evinced by Brooke.

The evidence of scope, originality, and the admirable control of the medium in his early war poetry, particularly strong in 'Marching', anticipates the superb quality of Rosenberg's best poems which he wrote from direct experience of trench warfare. However, more than with any other poet of the war, the reader is left with a feeling of frustration after reading his poetry, because, despite his brilliance, it becomes increasingly apparent that there are fundamental flaws in his heroic vision of the war, and that this inhibited his development. Most serious because it blocked his way to a more complete and more finely integrated realization of the heroism of the soldiers of the First World War is his belief, first clearly articulated in 'Marching', that the modern infantrymen in their superb fitness and proud, disciplined bearing worthily carry the warrior image into a twentieth-century context. This is a perfectly valid apprehension, but its danger for Rosenberg was that the close

connection which he made between the modern soldier and the classical heroic warrior prevented him from understanding that, in the peculiarly terrible situation in which the modern soldiers were, there was a very real heroism in seemingly undramatic behaviour: heroism that, ironically, is so evident in his own courageous endurance of his plight.

As the study of Rosenberg's background and of what he wrote before he went out to the Front has revealed, his imagination was bound up in the fierce energy, prowess, and magnificence of the classical hero, exemplified by his characterization of Moses. When it became apparent to him that heroic behaviour on the old classical lines was not possible in trench warfare, his image of the soldier became frozen, confined to the few qualities which the modern soldier had in common with the warrior of old.

As serious a flaw, but not one that has so far-reaching an effect on his poetry as his fixed image of the soldier, is his conception of war as a purging, liberating force. In any circumstances this is a questionable notion, but particularly so in a war of attrition, the issues of which became manifestly less convincing to those in the trenches as the war ground on. Nevertheless, the attraction of the conception persisted for Rosenberg, and, in what were to be the last eighteen months of his life, he dissipated a great deal of creative energy in attempting to convey this vision of war in a new verse drama which works in such mythical, metaphorical terms that it makes no impact as an expression of war. It will be seen, also, that this grave lack of substantiation in his use of metaphor extends to 'Daughters of War', the poem which pleased him the most and which he described as the "most epic".

What saved Rosenberg as a war poet was that, although 'Daughters of War' is the least satisfactory manifestation of it, he does, in fact, have a truly epic vision which, in the manner of Homer, seeks to explore and make vivid not only the huge dimensions of the conflict but also the whole experience of life in war. He thus incorporated into his poetry facets of war experience not considered material for poetry even by other trench poets, but which are akin to the description in 'The Iliad' of such details as the making of armour, bathing after battle, or the inlaid design of a chair in Achilles's tent.

It is significant of Rosenberg's poetic perceptiveness that he appears to have realized, almost from the outset of his going out to the trenches, the necessity of such a vision of the war, because, four months after his arrival in France, he wrote this important statement of intent in a letter to Lawrence Binyon:

I am determined that this war, with all its powers for devastation, shall not master my poeting; that is, if I am lucky enough to come through all right. I will not leave a corner of my consciousness covered up, but saturate myself with the strange and extraordinary new conditions of this life; and it will all refine itself into poetry later on. I have thoughts of a play round our Jewish hero, Judas Maccabeus. I have much real material here, and also there is some parallel of the invaders then to this war.

(1)

The passage indicates those strengths and weaknesses of Rosenberg as a war poet which have been referred to above. On the one hand, there is the epic desire to open himself to the whole experience of war, shaped by his belief in the heroic possibilities of man; on the other, the inability to see that this war could not support the notion of a dynamic, liberating hero like Judas Maccabeus, neither as a metaphor

(1) Isaac Rosenberg : Letter to Lawrence Binyon dated October 1916, in Collected Works p.248

for the conflict itself nor for the soldier. A further indication, in the passage, of the epic nature of Rosenberg's vision is his understanding of the epic poet's process of being wholly immersed in his subject matter, yet aesthetically distant from it. What we know of the appalling conditions on the Somme in October 1916 with which he had to contend as a soldier and as a poet give us some appreciation of how remarkable it was that he should have refused to allow his personal feelings about his experiences to dominate his poetic response, and thereby narrow his view to that of one man in the trenches (no matter how representative). This determination not to be confined to his own circumstances sets Rosenberg apart from the other trench poets, whose tendency was to explore only a limited area of their experience of the war. Even Owen, who, like Rosenberg, pushed beyond his immediate situation towards a tragic vision of the whole conflict, worked within the role he and Sassoon had consciously defined for themselves as the mouthpiece of the suffering and inarticulate troops.

The reasons that Rosenberg never developed this sense of mission have been discussed earlier, but it should be emphasized that Rosenberg's training in art, combined with the fact that his poetic sensibility evolved in different social and cultural circumstances from those of the other trench poets, made it impossible for him to respond to the war as they did.

It was perhaps more Rosenberg's freedom from the concerns and responsibilities felt so keenly by the middle-class officer poets and his being in touch with a culture unknown to them that account for his individual view and treatment of the war. To gauge this, it is instructive to read, in a letter written from the Front in 1917, Paul

Nash's understanding of his role in the war. Nash was a student at the Slade in 1910, the year before Rosenberg enrolled, and thus had the same teachers as Rosenberg and was part of the same student milieu. In addition, he, like Rosenberg, avoided getting closely involved in the modernistic movements in the art of the period, and he, too, enjoyed the support and friendship of Edward Marsh and Gordon Bottomley. Unlike Rosenberg, however, he was on active service at the Front for only three months; but as this description reveals, the effect on his sensibility was all-consuming:

... and the shells never cease. They alone plunge overhead, tearing away the rotting tree stumps, breaking the plank roads, striking down horses and mules, annihilating, maiming, maddening, they plunge into the grave which is this land ... It is unspeakable, godless, hopeless. *I am no longer an artist interested and curious, I am a messenger who will bring back word from the men who are fighting to those who want the war to go on forever.* Feeble and inarticulate will be my message, but it will have a bitter truth, and may it burn their lousy souls.

(2)

As the passion of these lines suggests, the need to be a spokesman dominated Nash's response, making him feel that all aesthetic considerations in his art which would, in normal circumstances, be as important as his subject, had now become almost irrelevant. "There could be no search for a subject matter for pictures, it was stark before his eyes", wrote Sir John Rothenstein of his paintings and drawings of the Front, "no search for an appropriate style: in such circumstances the question could hardly arise: nor was the spectacle so overwhelming and horrifying an occasion for scanning nature (or books) for the evocative image: the images were all about him." (3)

(2) Paul Nash : Outline: An Autobiography (Faber, London 1959)
pp.210-211

(3) Sir John Rothenstein : Paul Nash 1889-1946 (British Painters' Series; Beaverbrook Newspapers Ltd., London 1961) p.3

This digression into Nash's response to the war reveals the considerable difference between his artistic approach and that of Rosenberg in this period. It makes one realize that, when Rosenberg expressed his determination to Binyon that the war "should not master his poeting", he had a good deal more in mind than complaints about the extreme physical difficulties of writing poetry in the trenches. His letters and his poems bear testimony to a continual struggle to keep uppermost in his mind the aesthetic principles of selection, appropriate style, and the desirability of maintaining a distance from his subject. His artistic process would thus seem to be the very opposite of that of Nash, and of Owen and Sassoon, which has as its first principle the need to articulate the horror and suffering of war. In fact, in their greatest and most enduring work, Owen and Nash go very much beyond their aim of impassioned protest. It is evident that a poem such as 'Futility' and a painting such as 'We're Making a New World' are great works of art in any context, but, as Nash realized not a year after the war was over, the immersion of the artist in a cause could be dangerous to his art. Of his paintings and drawings of the Front, he wrote to Rothenstein:

I am pleased to have done them but I should have liked to have done them again! Only a few seem to me (looking back at them from the standard I have reached since) to be adequate aesthetic statements however telling they may seem at first glance as statements of certain violent emotional experiences.

(4)

It seems likely that Owen would have felt similarly about some of his poems, particularly those that are predominantly instruments of protest, if he had survived the war; whereas, raw and unfinished though a good deal of Rosenberg's poetry is, one cannot imagine that

(4) Paul Nash : Letter, 2 September 1919 , quoted in Anthony Bertram : Paul Nash: The Portrait of an Artist (Faber 1955) p.105

he would be critical of it in the way that Nash is of much of his own war art. Rosenberg was too conscious of his style, and free of involvement with any cause, for his poetry to be a surprise to him once it was removed from the context of war.

Any idea that Rosenberg was going to conform to the pattern of response common to many of the war poets - of early idealism followed by impassioned pacifism - is dispelled by the poems that he wrote in the first six months of arriving at the Front. It is interesting that even Owen, who had derided the glorification of war while a civilian in 1915, found when he went out to the trenches that "there was a fine heroic feeling about being in France", while Rosenberg, who had written 'Marching', had no such feeling. Indeed, as his treatment of the troop-ship makes evident, his aim was to avoid any dramatization of the situation. The poem 'The Troop Ship' is a deliberately unpretentious rendering of the experience of the channel crossing with his battalion in June 1916. His concentration, in the first part of the poem, is on the visual impression of the huddled, contorted bodies of the men trying to sleep on the deck. In the second part, he reveals the feelings of himself and others at being subjected to these unpleasant conditions, but admits of nothing more dramatic than tired irritation. This no doubt was his dominant feeling at the time, for the desperate need for sleep does displace any more stirring emotions. As he showed on several occasions, Rosenberg was half amused by the overwhelming effect apparently trivial discomforts could have on the mind: "We've had shells bursting two yards off", he wrote in the same month, "bullets whizzing all over the show, but all you are aware of is the agony of your heels." (5) Nevertheless, the understated

(5) Isaac Rosenberg : Letter to Miss Seaton, June 1916, in
Collected Works p.235

manner of treating his subject does suggest that he was putting into practice some of the ideas on war poetry which he expressed both in the letter to Binyon quoted above and in a letter of this period to Mrs. Cohen: "War should be approached in a colder way, more abstract, with less of the million feelings everybody feels; or all these should be concentrated in one distinguished emotion." (6) As well as showing something of Rosenberg's new clarity in the way war should be approached, 'The Troop Ship', minor poem though it is, also demonstrates a firm control of his medium. The run-on lines of the first sentence reinforce the visual impression by suggesting the twisting body, while in the second sentence the commas have the effect of drawing out the stress on the vowels of the end words, producing a querulous tone:

Grotesque and queerly huddled
 Contortionists to twist
 The sleepy soul to a sleep,
 We lie all sorts of ways
 And cannot sleep.
 The wet wind is so cold,
 And the lurching men so careless,
 That, should you drop to a doze,
 Winds' fumble or men's feet
 Are on your face.

(7)

His efforts to achieve the standard of artistic utterance which he envisages above resulted in two far more considerable poems later in the year. 'August 1914', believed to have been written in early August 1916, is probably a reaction to the over-emotional and, by then, hackneyed presentation of war still being welcomed by the British public. Rosenberg's distaste for this 'flagday' poetry had just been reinforced by the issue of *The Poetry Review* which Mrs. Cohen sent out to him - an issue containing poems which he felt shared the fault of 'second-hand phrases' with Rupert Brooke's "begloried sonnets" and

were as commonplace in content. Rosenberg's 'August 1914', in the hard spareness and complexity of its style, and in the objective weighing-up of the impact of war on the lives of the young men embroiled in it, is the antithesis of a poem such as 'Youth's Consecration' by Corporal Streets, which does no more than reproduce, in stale 'literary' language, the sentiments of the British pro-war Press. From Rosenberg's comments, it seems that Mrs. Cohen, as well as the Editors of *The Poetry Review*, admired Streets's poems; so it is worth quoting the sonnet mentioned above in order to illustrate current, serious, literary taste in war poetry in 1916, and thus show how independent and different was Rosenberg's poetic stance:

Youth's Consecration

Lovers of Life, dreamers with lifted eyes
 O Liberty at thy command we challenge Death!
 The monuments that tell our fathers' faith
 Shall be the altars of our sacrifice
 Dauntless we fling our lives into the van,
 Laughing at death, because within Youth's breast
 Flame lambent fires of Freedom; man for man
 We yield to thee our heritage, our best.
 Life's highest product youth exults in Life;
 We are Olympian gods in consciousness;
 Mortality to us is sweet, yet less
 We value Ease when Honour sounds the strife.
 Lovers of Life, we pledge thee Liberty
 And go to death calmly, triumphantly.

(8)

The starkness and strength of the opening question of 'August 1914' cuts through all the euphoria and sentiment of 'Youth's Consecration':

What in our lives is burnt
 In the fire of this?

It is a question that brooks no glib answer such as those which 'Youth's Consecration' supplies, and Rosenberg both uses and enlarges

(8) John William Streets : 'Youth's Consecration' in *The Poetry Review*
July-August 1916 vol.7 no.4 ;
 ed. Galloway Kyle (Erskine Macdonald, London)

on the two rhetorical questions that follow it ("The heart's dear granary? / The much we shall miss?") to suggest something of the enormity of what has been lost and what will be lost in the fire of war. What is lost is conveyed by the richly evocative image of the granary and all the images of harvest - gold, honey, and ripe fields - associated with it in the poem, while iron is at once the means of devastation (in the form of shells and bullets) and the hardening and destructive effect of war on men's lives.

R G Anderson has suggested that Rosenberg found the idea for his gold and iron metaphors in Swinburne's *'Perinde ac Cadaver'*. This is possible as they are linked there in a single line, but since fire, corn, honey, gold, and iron are so inextricably interwoven into Hebrew life and culture, it would seem more likely that Rosenberg was drawing on his own religious and literary heritage. Certainly, if these metaphors are read with the Torah and the Talmud in mind, they acquire a greater resonance, and a diversity of meaning and feeling that surely was intended. Honey, for instance, would convey, particularly to a Jew, fertility(*) and thus a rich and abundant life; something that is of great value(**); the beauty and goodness of the sacred law; and the joy of women.

The effect of these images is increased by their being developed organically. The image of what is lost when the "heart's granary" is burnt is expanded in the second stanza to include the gold and honey lives of men, and finally, by the two most explicit and violent images of the poem:

* From the references to lands flowing with milk and honey.

** The Talmud dilates frequently on the preciousness of honey.

Three lives hath one life -
 Iron, honey, gold.
 The gold, the honey gone -
 Left is the hard and cold.

Iron are our lives
 Molten right through our youth.
 A burnt space through ripe fields,
 A fair mouth's broken tooth.

(9)

As Bergonzi has observed, the peculiar force of these final images comes from their operating simultaneously on a literal and a symbolic level. They convey the harvest fields of Northern France in 1914 and in 1916, ruined by bombardment and trenches, and the faces and bodies of young men smashed by war, as well as the wider tragedy of life being shattered just as it reaches fulfilment.

The image of iron is developed in a similarly organic way. In the second verse there is recognition that in war the iron life of man takes over his being, since his more aesthetic and creative lives have been burnt away. If the poem ended at this point it would seem that Rosenberg regarded the war as a terrible but tempering power, hardening and simplifying the lives of men, but the strong negative sense of the final images and the force of 'molten' would seem to belie any such interpretation of the beginning of the third verse. "Molten right through our youth" suggests that actual subjection to the flames of war is utterly destructive to life, unmaking it even before it is finally destroyed.

Up to the end of the second stanza, Rosenberg would seem to be advancing much the same view of war as he does in 'On Receiving News of the War' and in 'Marching', but in the final stanza the three images of the disfiguring, brutalizing effect of war suggest that he

was moving towards a more anguished view of the human condition. However, it is not a view that he developed in his war poetry. His imagination was too caught by the Hebraic conception of the fighting man to pursue the image of man being brutalized by war, or to visualize him as a victim. 'August 1914' is thus one of the ways in which he opened his consciousness to the war.

More characteristic of the main direction of Rosenberg's vision is the remarkable 'Break of Day in the Trenches'. Paul Fussell considers this to be his finest poem, if not the finest poem of the war; with good reason, as it is deeply satisfying aesthetically and reveals a profound and original insight into the nature of modern war. One of its interesting features is that it affords a glimpse of Rosenberg's ability to assess accurately the worth of his poetry and to improve it. 'Break of Day in the Trenches' is a development of a greatly inferior poem 'In the Trenches' which he sent to Sonia Rodker in July 1916 with the comment: "Here's a little poem, a bit commonplace I'm afraid." In fact, the unusual way he describes the bombardment and the wry touch in "screwed out our jest" lift it above the commonplace, but he does employ the, by then, over-worked and conventional poppy symbol to portray the soldier:

I snatched two poppies
From the parapet's ledge,
Two bright red poppies
That winked on the ledge.
Behind my ear
I stuck one through,
One blood red poppy
I gave to you.

The sandbags narrowed
And screwed out our jest,
And tore the poppy
You had on your breast ...
Down - a shell - O! Christ,
I am choked ... safe ... dust blind, I
See trench floor poppies
Strewn. Smashed you lie. (10)

In a few weeks he had worked on this raw and minor piece to produce a poem that is refined, delicately balanced, and wholly different from anything that had ever been written on war. The poppy has become subtly transformed into a symbol of the fragility and beauty of human life in the trenches on both sides of No Man's Land. As in the earlier poem, it is through the fate of the poppy that Rosenberg makes his final point, but one is struck by how much more poignant and far-reaching is the last image of the poppy in 'Break of Day in the Trenches'. The mere juxtaposition of the poppy and man has given way to a far more complex association that, operating as it does on a real and a symbolic level, permits far greater nuances of mood and meaning. The most dramatic difference, however, is the introduction of the "sardonic rat" which the speaker addresses in the poem. It is through the bright, hard eyes of the inwardly grinning rat that one sees that the old heroic values of strength, prowess, and courage have become inverted:

The darkness crumbles away.
 It is the same old druid Time as ever,
 Only a live thing leaps my hand,
 A queer sardonic rat,
 As I pull the parapet's poppy
 To stick behind my ear.
 Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
 Your cosmopolitan sympathies.
 Now you have touched this English hand
 You will do the same to a German
 Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
 To cross the sleeping green between.
 It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
 Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes,
 Less chanced than you for life,
 Bonds to the whims of murder,
 Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,
 The torn fields of France.
 What do you see in our eyes
 At the shrieking iron and flame
 Hurled through still heavens?

What quaver - what heart aghast?
 Poppies whose roots are in man's veins
 Drop, and are ever dropping;
 But mine in my ear is safe -
 Just a little white with the dust.

(11)

As well as being an accurate portrayal of the way dawn comes, the unusual verb 'crumbles' in the first line conveys sensitively the soldiers' feeling that their protective covering of darkness was being gradually broken down. The sense of uneasiness that this image creates is strengthened by the depiction of Time as a Druid, an apt metaphor since the Druids' sacrifices were human, and, like the German attacks, were usually made at dawn. However, 'same old' and 'as ever' suggest a weary familiarity with this daily fear. In two lines, therefore, Rosenberg has established an appropriate context for the introduction of the one creature in the trenches that is relaxed, free, and fully alive: the rat, who, unlike the soldiers huddled below, runs along the parapet and crosses no-man's-land at his pleasure. He then, not the soldiers, superbly fit though they are, possesses the qualities for triumphant survival.

Of anything that Rosenberg wrote in the war, his use of the rat must surely set him apart from all other poets. Rats proliferated in the trenches and were thus a daily part of the troops' experience, yet, on the whole, poets ignore them except for the occasional reference to them expressing disgust and even horror. Only Rosenberg was detached enough to see the potential for irony in making these thriving, free-ranging creatures comment on the predicament of the fighting man in the trenches. The manner in which the rat does comment is admirably done, for Rosenberg does not empower him with

(11) Isaac Rosenberg : 'Break of Day in the Trenches' in
Collected Works pp.103-4

human speech, but works wholly within his actual experience and knowledge of the rat. The rat is a projection of a human point of view, but despite this, he, in his own right, emerges as an animal of wit and charm, with his "cosmopolitan sympathies" and amusement that the tables have been turned on man. The horror and absurdity of modern war encompassed by the sardonic grin of the rat and the symbol of the falling poppy are taken by most critics, including Silkin and Fussell, to be the theme of the poem. It is true that the greater part of the poem - the soldiers incarcerated in the trenches, the torn fields of France, and the relentlessly falling poppies - illustrates this theme, but I feel that there is more significance in what the speaker does with the parapet's poppy and in the way the troops are presented in the poem than previous readings have allowed. Normally, the gesture of putting a flower behind one's ear signifies a mood of gaiety and jauntiness (sexual enticement aside). Rosenberg certainly intends it in this spirit here, but considering that the poppy symbolizes the tenuous hold the soldiers have on life, the gesture becomes one of gallant defiance of death and of the appalling circumstances in which they were embroiled. The return to the parapet's poppy, at the end of the poem, after the revelation of the nightmare of war, appears as a moving re-assertion of the gallant spirit. This is particularly so as the powdering of dust, with all its multiple associations of mortality, suggests that the spirit does not come through unscathed.

At this moment in the poem, Rosenberg would appear to be taking a significant step towards a new insight into heroism - a possibility supported by his earlier inversion of the old heroic values through the juxtaposition of the haughty athletes with the rat. However, one senses an ambivalence in his attitude, evident in the

stress that he puts on the heroic beauty of the soldiers, which seems not merely to reveal the irony of their situation. This image, recalling the hauteur, athletic beauty, and fearlessness of a biblical hero such as David, is so arresting that it is clear that Rosenberg was wholly imaginatively involved. Moreover, it is an image which he used in 'Marching', and was to use again in several later poems with no ironic import.

As the original treatment of war in the poems above illustrates, Rosenberg's concern to discover what distinguished this war from any other human experience made him alert to a wide range of human and non-human activity that went unnoticed by poets wholly involved in protesting against the furtherance of the war, or by those such as Streets who were involved in presenting the conventional patriotic line. As well as seeing the irony that soldiers, as superbly equipped physically and mentally for combat as any warrior of the past, should be "less chanced for life" than a rat, Rosenberg saw the irony that Spring, a season so contrary in every particular to the death, sterility and ugliness of war, should continue to appear, even at the Front. He noticed that soldiers, far from reaping the rich, albeit spiritual, rewards envisaged by Brooke and Streets, are often denied, in battle, the fulfilment of even a basic need such as water:

'We cannot give you water,
Were all England in your breath,'
'Water! - water! - O water!'
He moaned and swooned to death.

(12)

Rosenberg was sensitive, as indeed were many other soldiers, to the moments of extraordinary beauty occurring in the midst of all the destruction and ugliness, and he celebrated one such moment in the

most lyrical and poignant of his trench poems, 'Returning, We Hear The Larks.' The poem opens with a description of an exhausted platoon returning from the Front Line just before first light, and hearing a lark, and it then moves from this moment of actual experience to a philosophical meditation upon it:

Sombre the night is.
And though we have our lives, we know
What sinister threat lurks there.

Dragging these anguished limbs, we only know
This poison-blasted track opens on our camp -
On a little safe sleep.

But hark! joy - joy - strange joy.
Lo! heights of night ringing with unseen larks.
Music showering our upturned list'ning faces.

Death could drop from the dark
As easily as song -
But song only dropped,
Like a blind man's dreams on the sand
By dangerous tides,
Like a girl's dark hair for she dreams no ruin lies there,
Or her kisses where a serpent hides.

(13)

Although Rosenberg was almost certainly drawing from his own encounter with a lark, it is of interest to contrast his poem with one on the same subject by J W Streets(*) that he would have read in the

(13) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.109

* 'A Lark Above The Trenches'

Hushed is the shriek of hurtling shells: and hark!
Somewhere within that bit of deep blue sky,
Grand in his loneliness, his ecstasy,
His lyric wild and free, carols a lark.
I in the trench, he lost in heaven afar;
I dream of love, its ecstasy he sings;
Both lure my soul to love till, like a star,
It flashes into life: O tireless wings
That beat love's message into melody -
A song that touches in this place remote
Gladness supreme in its undying note,
And stirs to life the soul of memory -
'Tis strange that while you're beating into life
Men here below are plunged in sanguine strife.

(p.245)

July 1916 issue of *The Poetry Review*. The superiority of 'Returning, We Hear The Larks' in style and diction is too evident for detailed comment, but the comparison does highlight how much larger and more complex was Rosenberg's insight into the experience of beauty in these circumstances than was Streets's. The lark song stirred in Streets memories of love and peacetime life, and an awareness of how different was the world of men engaged in war from the world of the lark. In Rosenberg the song brought an awareness of how sharpened and yet how modified by war is man's perception of beauty. The ecstasy he depicts so movingly in the second verse suggests that in the circumstances of war, the rare moments of beauty are felt with great intensity, but in the last verse he explores the implications of the experience. The word 'death', combined with the run-on lines, the regular metre and the sibilants of the second line introduces a soft, but insidious note into the moment of rapture. The feeling of lurking death underlying beauty is supported by the two images that follow, of objects which, like the lark's song, are in themselves innocent and lovely, but have an unconscious potential for the destruction of those who venerate them. The final verse thus echoes the pre-occupation with death that dominates the first half of the poem. There, the soldiers' relief at their survival of the night's patrol is deeply affected by their awareness of how slender is their chance of life. Similarly, the lark's song, once a source of uncomplicated joy, has for them become an experience of exquisite pleasure and menace.

The consciousness of death evident in 'Returning, We Hear The Larks' is the informing power of Rosenberg's finest war poem, 'Dead Man's Dump'(*), the poem which Bergonzi and Alvarez agree is "the greatest poem by an Englishman to have been produced by the war."

On 8 May 1917 Rosenberg wrote laconically to Marsh of the poem's inception: "I've written some lines suggested by going out wiring, or rather carrying wire up the line on limbers and running over dead bodies lying about. I don't think what I've written is very good but I think the substance is, and when I work on it I'll make it fine." (15)

What he actually produced was an extraordinarily powerful rendering of the experience of battle, and an exploration of the mysteries of death. The poem follows the terrible path of the lurching limber as it is dragged over corpses and through the howling chaos of high-explosives. John H Johnston sees this poem as a series of inchoate impressions of death, only loosely bound together by the movement of the limber. In fact, the poem forms a magnificently orchestrated whole that centres on two crucial questions in the fourth stanza:

Earth! have they gone into you?
Somewhere they must have gone,
And flung on your hard back
Is their souls' sack,
Emptied of God-ancestral essences.
Who hurled them out? Who hurled?

(16)

As the nature of the first question and the lines that amplify it imply, Rosenberg, while accepting the deadness of the soldiers' mortal bodies, cannot equally accept that the spirit that

* The analysis of 'Dead Man's Dump' is an adaptation of that given in my unpublished M.A. thesis: K M McArthur: The Collapse of the Heroic Tradition in Twentieth Century English War Poetry (University of Cape Town 1979) pp.201-8

(14) Bernard Bergonzi : Heroes' Twilight (London 1965) p.116

(15) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.254

(16) op.cit. p.109

animated them is also destroyed. This conflict of response is evident in the opening stanzas of the poem, which present the dead whose fate is to be examined deeply:

The wheels lurched over sprawled dead
But pained them not, though their bones crunched,
Their shut mouths made no moan, ...

(17)

In these lines the poet's conscious intelligence tells him that the mutilation of the bodies of the corpses by the heavy wheels of the limber does not matter, for they are dead, but the words 'lurched' and 'crunched', and his desperate insistence that they felt no pain reveal that emotionally he cannot accept that they are dead. In the lines that follow, this suggestion is intensified by the assertion of their human origin:

They lie there huddled, friend and foeman,
Man born of man, and born of woman,
And shells go crying over them
From night till night and now.

(18)

As in Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', the desolation of death in battle is increased, not mitigated, by the endless crying of the shells seeming to be the only token of mourning for the dead. In both poems the poet's pity comes forcefully through the sombre imagery, but Rosenberg's reaches across the boundary of war to include the enemy corpses.

It is significant that Rosenberg has preferred to 'enemy' the Old English 'foeman', which has the effect of imparting a dignity to the German dead, and a sense that these soldiers are part of an old and honourable tradition. This impression is strengthened by his

treatment of the dead in the following stanza. Instead of portraying the corpses as poor, mutilated victims, as Owen would have done, he portrays them as young warriors arrested at the peak of their virility:

Now she [the Earth] has them at last!
In the strength of their strength
Suspended - stopped and held.

(19)

This conception of death as the summary suspension of vivid life receives increasing emphasis in this poem, so that the impression of the finality of death, that is certainly the one on which Rosenberg concludes the poem, is to some extent countered by his belief in the soldiers' fierce energy going on in a new dimension - a belief clearly implied in the declamatory statement that opens the following stanza: "What fierce imaginings their dark souls lit ...", and by his conception of the earth as a great female, lusting for the souls of her warriors. As will be seen, he was to develop this idea in 'Daughters of War', a poem which seeks to explore more extensively the passage of the warrior spirit after death.

In the fourth stanza one sees the beginning of his vision of the finality of death, when he suddenly reduces the heroic image of the soldiers contained in the above lines to: "... souls' sack/ Emptied of God-ancestral essences." (20) However, the feeling of deadness that is so strong in this image is offset by his following speculation on the passage of the spirit.

(19) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.110

(20) *ibid.*

The climax of the poem is reached in the ninth and tenth stanzas, when the wide focus on all the dead strewn in and along the path of the limber is narrowed onto a single man dying on a stretcher. His fate, which is to pass from being a man, the object of human tenderness, to something alien and inhuman, is representative of the fate of all the dead on the battlefield.

The moment of his death, the splattering of his brains on the stretcher-bearer's face, is made deliberately graphic and painful to emphasize the gulf between the just dead and the older dead, who have become strange and remote, their human identity gone:

A man's brains splattered on
A stretcher-bearer's face;
His shock shoulders slipped their load,
But when they bent to look again
The drowning soul was sunk too deep
For human tenderness.

They left this dead with the older dead,
Stretched at the cross roads.

(21)

It seems that the dead were actually placed at a crossroads so that they could be the more easily found when there was an opportunity to bury them, but since in the past it was customary to bury highwaymen and other social outcasts at a crossroads, it is possible that Rosenberg meant this image to operate on a symbolic level as well, to reinforce the feeling of alienation that is so strong in the following lines:

Burnt black by strange decay,
Their sinister faces lie
The lid over each eye,
The grass and coloured clay
More motion have than they,
Joined to the great sunk silences.

(22)

This is the culmination of all the images of deadness in the poem, and one of the most powerful and explicit expressions of the finality of death in the literature of the First World War. It is the answer to the question: "Earth! have they gone into you?" which the poet asks in the fourth stanza. There is no Wordsworthian optimism - no harmonious blending of the dead men with nature - for they have become infinitely strange, more dead than the grass and clay, which in time will come to life again. They are part of a great void; which is very different from the unifying spirit to which Wordsworth believed Man and Nature belonged and would return.

The last part of the poem is a sombre corollary to this stanza. It describes the efforts of a dying man to cry out to the living. He succeeds, but as the wheels of the limber touch his face, he too is beyond human help and tenderness:

We heard his very last sound,
And our wheels grazed his dead face.
(23)

The point that the lines dramatize is not the failure of the living to reach the dying man, for it is clear he is past their help. It is the desperate clinging of the man to life, in this instance represented by the plunging limber:

His dark hearing caught our far wheels,
And the choked soul stretched weak hands
To reach the living word the far wheels said,
The blood-dazed intelligence beating for light,
Crying through the suspense of the far torturing wheels
...

Will they come? Will they ever come?
(24)

The terrible effort in the soldier's struggle to stay alive, conveyed by the verbs 'caught', 'stretched', 'reach', 'beating' and 'crying', and the urgency of the rhythm, end hopelessly and finally in a weak scream. That Rosenberg should have made this soldier's last sound a scream is significant, because of the terror and sense of protest this word connotes.

The second question asked in the fourth stanza: "Who hurled them out? Who hurled?" is answered directly in the middle of the poem in a single stanza that conveys powerfully the might and terror of modern warfare. From the last line of this stanza it is evident that Rosenberg believed that man was ultimately responsible for the devastation of human life, but only in so far as he had blindly unleashed vast forces that were beyond his power to control. To convey the might of these forces, he portrays them as Earth, a huger and infinitely more terrifying version of the 'Female God' who lusts for the souls, not the bodies of men. In the third verse she is shown waiting with menacing impatience for them to be returned to her, but in this stanza her watchfulness erupts into maniacal fury:

Maniac Earth! howling and flying, your bowel
 Seared by the jagged fire, the iron love
 The impetuous storm of savage love.
 Dark Earth! dark heaven, swinging in chemic smoke
 What dead are born when you kiss each soundless soul
 With lightning and thunder from your mined heart,
 Which man's self dug, and his blind fingers loosed.
 (25)

Much of the forcefulness of these lines comes from the combination of images of violent pain with images of equally violent sex. Earth's huge paroxysms are therefore both the agonizing pain of her "seared bowel" and "mined heart", and the orgasmic love for the men who have

blindly woken her into frenzied life. The wild activity of the howling Earth makes the question: "What dead are born?" rhetorical, for it is clear no man can survive her disruptions. This is reinforced by the image of earth and heaven swinging together in a hell of chemic smoke, and the feeling of man's passivity and helplessness is suggested by the one quiet image, "soundless soul".

Of all the poems which Rosenberg wrote, it is 'Dead Man's Dump', not 'Daughters of War', that best exemplifies his epic vision. In its totality, this poem is beautifully balanced. The focus shifts constantly from the particular to the cosmic, so that the images of individual deaths merge into a vision of vast destruction, and, at the end, the weak scream of the dying man to the men on the limber seems to be the cry against untimely death of all the soldiers in this war, and of all men in all wars.

Death crowds the poetry of the First World War, which is to be expected, since in no other campaign in British history was there such a prolonged exposure to it. Even behind the lines, the troops were shelled frequently, and multiple signs of the violent disruption of human life were everywhere apparent. One might also expect poets to write about the never-ending harassment of the lice that infested the bodies and clothes of the troops in the trenches. Prose accounts of life in the trenches, including letters and diaries, are full of the misery caused by these vermin, but only Rosenberg saw the desperate efforts of the troops to rid themselves of lice as a subject for poetry. He was able, moreover, to treat this seemingly unpoetic material wittily and aesthetically. In the first of the poems on lice, 'The Immortals', he makes use of the convention of heroic style and bathos favoured by Pope and Swift to bring a wry humour to the

impossibility of ridding oneself of these pests in the trenches. The devil metaphor is a peculiarly apt one in these circumstances, for the lice correspond closely to the mediaeval conception of the small vicious devils that, following in the train of the greater ones, tormented man in a variety of unpleasant ways. In 'Louse Hunting', the attack on the vermin is depicted as a brilliantly energetic dance. Far from pointing up the unsanitary conditions and miseries of the trenches, Rosenberg reveals an artist's excitement over the vivid patterning of whirling limbs and vast leaping shadows in the flickering candle-light of the dugout. This painter's apprehension of the scene is heightened by the poet's awareness of the ironic contrasts the incident presents - that the "supreme littleness" of the lice should provoke a wild display of energy in "the supreme flesh" of man; that the dark music of sleep should be transformed in an instant by the lice to a Highland Fling, that their oaths might make godhead shrink but not the lice.

The fascination with energy apparent in this depiction of the louse hunt recalls Rosenberg's delight in the fierce energy of his hero, Moses. So far in this chapter it is principally the catholic nature of his poetic vision and the way it differs from that of other poets which have been discussed, but as has been amply demonstrated, the heroic, in all its physical glory, largeness of spirit, and energy was at the heart of Rosenberg's original vision of the war; it now remains to consider in detail the effect of front-line experience on his need to respond to war heroically.

In the above discussion of 'Break of Day in the Trenches', it was pointed out that the heroic image of the soldiers which the poem contains is substantially the same as the image of the soldiers

in 'Marching'. Rosenberg retains the conception of the troops, redolent with the heroic pride, beauty, strength and courage of biblical and classical heroes, allied with the recognition that modern warfare presents no opportunity for the enactment of these virtues in the old manner. In 'Break of Day in the Trenches' it is evident that he has a profounder understanding of the nightmare nature of bombardment only glimpsed in 'Marching', and of the powerlessness of the troops in such a situation, but the very fact that he depicts them as "haughty athletes" with "strong eyes" and fine limbs implies that he believed they continued "to husband the ancient glory." Some justification for his holding to the heroic image of the soldiers comes a few lines later when he asks what else the rat sees in the "strong eyes":

What do you see in our eyes
At the shrieking iron and flame
Hurled through still heavens?
What quaver - what heart aghast?

(26)

The revelation of horror and fear in their eyes is so contrary to the original image of their fearless and proud eyes that a feeling of tension is produced, and one realizes suddenly what enormous effort was involved in merely maintaining the calm, disciplined stance implied by the earlier description of the men. Belief in the heroic dignity of the troops is also suggested by the tragic grandeur of the language of this passage, particularly the apocalyptic line: "Hurled through still heavens?" Most moving, however, is the gallant defiance of war expressed in the speaker's sticking the poppy from the parapet behind his ear.

From these instances it would appear that Rosenberg was substantiating the intuition of 'Marching', that heroism was still possible in modern war, but not in the brilliant, active form portrayed by his Moses. It is evident, however, that at this early stage of his war, he was still a long way from a fully-realized conception of a new type of heroism that manifested itself in undramatic behaviour such as enduring, comradeship, maintaining discipline in extraordinarily difficult conditions, and in not giving way to fear. Behaviour, in fact, that comes through in the lines of many of the letters that Rosenberg wrote from the Front, such as the evidence of unselfish concern in this passage from one of his letters to Marsh:

The chap next to me was suddenly taken with Diarrhoea and kept on lifting the sheet of his Bivouac, and as I lay at the end the rain came beating on my nakedness all night. Next morning, I noticed the poor chap's discoloured pants hanging on a bough near by, and I thought after all I had the best of it.

(27)

One of the blocks to his evolving a heroism of the common man was that his imagination was still gripped by the idea of expressing the war through a biblical hero. It will be recalled from the introduction to this chapter that the hero Rosenberg selected was the great Jewish warrior, Judas Maccabeus, who liberated Judah from the tyranny of King Antiochus IV in the second century B.C. As it was stated in the Introduction, it is hard to see what parallels Rosenberg could have drawn between the warfare of attrition of the Western Front and the series of brilliant and decisive battles Maccabeus fought over open terrain, and even harder to see a parallel between Judas Maccabeus, a hero wholly of the classical type, and any man, or group of men, in that sector of the war in 1916 and 1917. Judas Maccabeus has all the

essential heroic qualities: a magnificent and awe-inspiring appearance; immense personal prowess in arms; an intense faith and belief in his mission; and, above all, the ability to inspire his usually outnumbered, fearful and reluctant men to extraordinary feats in battle. No such individual hero did or could emerge on the Western Front, although this might be possible in other theatres of war, as in the case of Lawrence of Arabia in the campaign against Turkey

The only hint that Rosenberg gives of how he was contemplating using the Maccabeus legend is in his mention to Binyon of the "parallel" he saw "in the savagery of the invaders then to this war." The fact that he compares the savagely destructive forces of Antioch not to the Germans but to "this war" suggests that he was envisaging a symbolic abstract treatment of his contemporary material. The "savagery" would thus symbolize the vaster savagery of modern mechanized warfare, and the heroic resistance of Maccabeus and his men to numerically superior, better-equipped armies could represent the determination of the British not to lose spirit and give in to forces that threatened to engulf them. Even so, the main objection remains, the objection that lies in the very different nature of the brilliant, active heroism of Judas Maccabeus and the unglamorous, 'sticking it out' heroism of the troops in the trenches. Probably, Rosenberg realized something of this, for 'The Unicorn', the fragment of a play he did write in 1917, has nothing in it of Maccabeus's heroism; but the idea was far from being a passing fancy. As late as February 1917, after eight months at the Front, he was writing to Bottomley: "I do believe I could make a fine thing of Judas. Judas as a character is more magnanimous than Moses, and I believe I could make it very intense and write a lot from material out here." (28) In his last letter two days before he died he wrote: "I wanted to write a

battle song for the Judaeans but can think of nothing strong and wonderful enough yet." (29) Clearly, however much Rosenberg might have been led by his circumstances to portray instances of a different, less flamboyant, heroism, at the back of his mind there remained for his war poetry an epic heroic standard derived largely from his Hebraic background.

The exceedingly difficult conditions in which Rosenberg wrote made it impossible for him to produce the sustained, concentrated effort essential for the sort of epic work on the war that he was envisaging. In only 'Daughters of War', the poem that in some ways complements 'Dead Man's Dump', did he feel that he had expressed the essence of his vision, and captured his sense of "the inexorableness the human (or inhuman) side of this war has." (30) He took immense pains with this poem, as he told Marsh: "It has taken me about a year to write; for I have changed and rechanged it and thought hard over that poem ...". (31) He stressed, to an unimpressed Marsh, that he felt it was his best poem, and significantly the "most complete, most epic." (32)

Rosenberg refers to the "Daughters of War" as "Amazons" in the poem and in his letters, but they are in fact more truly the Valkyries of Scandinavian mythology. The myth of the Valkyries, the terrible handmaidens of Odin, who flew over the battlefield fanning the flames of war so that those warriors they had selected for Valhalla would be consumed, appealed to poets in the nineteenth

(28) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.253

(29) *ibid.* p.272;

(30) *ibid.* p.260

(31) *loc.cit.*;

(32) *ibid.* p.262

century. There are several Valkyrie poems of this period, the most notable being by Felicia Hemans and by Robert Southey, so Rosenberg probably came across them in his reading of nineteenth-century poetry. One can understand why he saw in them the potential to express his vision of the war, for the image of the great, wild female spirits whose demands are inexorable and inescapable corresponds closely with his apprehension of the huge scale and inexorable nature of the conflict. That the Valkyries desired only the bravest and strongest of men also accords with Rosenberg's view of the troops as worthy successors to the warriors of the past.

Rosenberg's habit of portraying strength and energy as rhythmic movement, as in 'Marching' and 'Louse Hunting' and in some of his earlier poems(*) is repeated with striking effect in 'Daughters of War' by his use of dance to convey the fierce primeval energy and power of the Daughters of War:

Space beats the ruddy freedom of their limbs-
 Their naked dances with man's spirit naked
 By the root side of the tree of life,
 (The underside of things
 And shut from earth's profoundest eyes).

I saw in prophetic gleams
 These mighty daughters in their dances
 Beckon each soul aghast from its crimson corpse
 To mix in their glittering dances.
 I heard the mighty daughters' giant sighs
 In sleepless passion for the sons of valour,
 And envy of the days of flesh
 Barring their love with mortal boughs across-
 The mortal boughs - the mortal tree of life.
 The old bark burnt with iron wars
 They blow to a live flame
 To char the young green days
 And reach the occult soul; they have no softer lure
 No softer lure than the savage ways of death.

* e.g. 'Day' and 'At Night'.

We were satisfied of our lords the moon and the sun
 To take our wage of sleep and bread and warmth-
 These maidens came - these strong ever-living Amazons,
 And in an easy might their wrists
 Of night's sway and noon's sway the sceptres brake,
 Clouding the wild - the soft lustres of our eyes.
 Clouding the wild lustres, the clinging tender lights;
 Driving the darkness into the flame of day,
 With the Amazonian wind of them
 Over our corroding faces
 That must be broken - broken for evermore
 So the soul can leap out
 Into their huge embraces.
 Though there are human faces
 Best sculptures of Deity,
 And sinews lusted after
 By the Archangels tall,
 Even these must leap to the love heat of these maidens
 From the flame of terrene days
 Leaving grey ashes to the wind - to the wind.

(33)

The originality of the opening phrase arrests the attention, emphasizing Rosenberg's conception of the Daughters of War as immense spirits whose bodies impinge on the very edges of space and yet are beneath the tree of life. The wildness and swirling energy of their dance, that is conveyed by this phrase and by other images that suggest unrestrained movement ("ruddy freedom of their limbs", "naked dances", "man's spirit naked", "live flame", "savage ways of death") are reinforced by the freedom of the rhythm that weaves spondees, dactyls and anapaests into the iambic pattern and varies at will the number of feet per line. As a metaphor to express the tumult and mad unleashing of destructive energy that is the action of the war, the dance of the Daughters is apt. It represents a variation by Rosenberg on the Odin myth, which portrays the Valkyries as merely flying over the battlefield choosing their victims. He diverges, too, from the original myth in his emphasis on the lustful nature of the Valkyries. Their eagerness to grasp the "sons of valour" and their enormous power are emphasized by the contemptuous ease with which they sweep aside

the sun and the moon who ruled the warriors on earth. An erotic explication such as this of death in war is, as Fussell reminds us, nothing new, indeed "since antiquity everyone who has experienced both war and love has known there is a curious intercourse between them" (34), but only Rosenberg in the First World War sensed the epic possibilities of this "intercourse".

Yet, while one is much in sympathy with Rosenberg's attempt to find a metaphor that would express a wider vision of the war, as the poem progresses it becomes evident that in its present form it is not able to encompass the diversity of his vision. In the passage above, the Daughters' enormous sexual appetite does imply a feeling, articulated by many, of being sucked in by a vast anonymous power that would inevitably consume them. However, the poet seems to lose sight of this terrifying aspect of the Daughters, and in later sections of the poem emphasizes an image, of the same creature, that is wholly in conflict:

One (whose great lifted face,
Where wisdom's strength and beauty's strength
And the thewed strength of large beasts
Moved and merged, gloomed and lit)
Was speaking, surely, as the earth-men's earth fell away;
Whose new hearing drunk the sound
Where pictures, lutes, and mountains mixed
With the loose spirit of a thought.
Essenced to language, thus-

'My sisters force their males
From the doomed earth, from the doomed glee
And hankering of hearts.
Frail hands gleam up through the human quagmire and lips of
ash
Seem to wail, as in sad faded paintings
Far sunken and strange.
My sisters have their males
Clean of the dust of old days
That clings about those white hands
And yearns in those voices sad.

(34) Paul Fussell :The Great War and Modern Memory (Oxford University Press, New York 1975) p.270

But these shall not see them,
 Or think of them in any days or years,
 They are my sisters' lovers in other days and years.'

(35)

This wise, beautiful and strong Daughter of War, who speaks with tragic grandeur of the fate of the "sons of valour", seems hardly to be related to the savage, passionate Valkyries of the first part of the poem. It would appear that in this section of the poem Rosenberg was seeking to communicate a metaphysical vindication of the carnage in the war, but he has failed to notice how contradictory is his second image of the Daughters. From three of Rosenberg's letters(*) it is evident that Marsh felt uneasy about this part of the poem, but instead of pinpointing the real weaknesses of the poem, he made his usual criticism that Rosenberg's poetry was "obscure". Thus, poor Rosenberg offers a paraphrase of a poem which, whatever else it might with justification be accused of, is perfectly clear in content.

Marsh might also have questioned, and thus have encouraged Rosenberg to work upon, his presentation of the soldiers. The classical heroic image of the soldiers, which Rosenberg employs in 'Marching', has inherent dangers for him, as has been discussed, but at the time at which he wrote the poem, the magnificent physique of the troops, their controlled strength expressed in the discipline of the march, and the knowledge that they were going to face a vast and terrible conflict warranted his description of them as "husbanding the ancient glory". However, in 'Daughters of War', apart from the physical beauty and strength of the soldiers, there is nothing to substantiate the heroic image. Indeed, the absolute obedience of the "sons of

(35) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works pp.113 lines 40-61

(*) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works pp.257,260,261

valour" to the will of the Daughters, and the basic quality of their human lives ("satisfied ... to take our wage of sleep and bread and warmth") are hardly heroic. Admittedly, this poem is entirely in a mythical mode and the focus is on what happens to the soldiers after death, but the static, unfulfilled nature of the heroic image is a fault common to most of Rosenberg's war poetry, and one that becomes manifest the moment there is any concentration on the modern soldier himself.

Rosenberg's paraphrase of the last section of the poem: "The end is an attempt to imagine the severance of all human relationship and the fading away of human love" (36) does little to eradicate the real difficulty, which is that it is not clear whose white frail hands are reaching out and whose are the wailing voices. They have generally been supposed to belong to the soldiers, but the femininity of the hands and the wailing precludes such an interpretation. This reading is substantiated by the concluding three lines, which certainly refer to the earth women and appear to sum up the preceding stanza.

Rosenberg harboured no hope, as Brooke and others did, that death did not mean the end of all human ties. The images of the fading painting and the shaken-off dust reveal that he saw all human feelings and emotions fading, and finally disappearing forever after death. As the last section of the poem reveals, he viewed this process with profound sadness, but there is no suggestion of protest.

The deep concern for the women at home that is evident in the compassionate tone of the last part of 'Daughters of War' is relatively unusual in the trench poetry of the First World War. Far

(36) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.257

more common is a passionate celebration of the comradeship that developed between fighting men - a group comradeship that very often became a love as intense, as selfless, and as all-consuming as any heterosexual love. Those in the group were those who shared the horrors of trench warfare, extending even to the enemy, who were regarded as being fellow-sufferers. Such a strong group feeling, however, bred a fierce exclusiveness of all not directly involved in the fighting, and it engendered in combatant soldiers a complexity of emotion, ranging from bitter hatred of the Staff, to a sense of alienation from their families and loves in Britain. However, because his literary interests were entirely nurtured by his contact with the civilian world, and possibly because his being a Jew kept him from forming the intense relationships in the trenches that Sassoon, Owen, Graves, and Reed certainly did, it is clear that Rosenberg felt little of the scornful exclusiveness towards non-combatants that is part of their poetic response to the war. He certainly developed a sense of comradeship with his fellows, as his concern for the poor soldier with dysentery reveals, but he was able to keep himself open to other relationships from which the above-mentioned poets had to a large extent cut themselves off.

The poems 'Soldier Twentieth Century', 'Girl to Soldier on Leave', and 'Home-Thoughts from France' which, like 'Daughters of War', deal to some extent with the soldier's relationship with those at home are of particular interest in this study, for they confirm how readily Rosenberg, when the context afforded him the opportunity, turned to the heroic image to portray the soldier.

'Soldier Twentieth Century' and 'Girl to Soldier on Leave' are companion pieces to 'Daughters of War', since they fill out the

images of the "sons of valour" and of the women who mourn them. So similar are they that, had Rosenberg survived, he would probably have discarded the earlier, less developed poem, 'Soldier Twentieth Century'. It would therefore be repetitive to discuss it here, except to point out that it makes more explicit than 'Girl to Soldier on Leave' that the soldier's heroic stature comes largely from his capacity to suffer. This is one of the few indications in Rosenberg's work that he was aware that the heroism of this war must be different in essence from the traditional conception of active heroism.

Napoleon and Caesar
Out of you grew.

Out of unthinkable torture,
Eyes kissed by death,
Won back to the world again,
Lost and won in a breath,

(37)

Something of this awareness carries over into the more fully realized portrait of the hero in 'Girl to Soldier on Leave', for whereas the hyperbolic terms in which the soldier is described recall the splendid heroic hyperboles of the emergent 'Moses', the heroic standard which is employed is not that of Moses but of Prometheus, the tragic, suffering hero of Greek mythology, who, for his services to mankind and for his resistance to Zeus's oppression, was sentenced to eternal torture. While it is easy enough to see the connection Rosenberg was making between the suffering of Prometheus and the suffering of his soldier hero, it is less easy to see how the soldier is a splendid rebel in the sense that Prometheus was when he championed mankind in defiance of Zeus. Perhaps paradoxically, considering the different nature of their heroism, the answer is to be found in Rosenberg's view of Moses as a great purging force who would "tear up the tight roots"

of the stultifying Egyptian way of life, and bring about a new, dynamic world. The reference in the third and fourth verses to the soldier's similarly dead and colourless life suggests that Rosenberg saw a connection between the effete Egyptian society and that of the pre-war world, and saw a connection too between Moses's heroic rebellion and the modern soldier's fighting in a vast, destructive war. This connection is reinforced by the fact that, just as Moses cast off everything that seemed to him to impede the fulfilment of his ambition, so this soldier is breaking the last fragile bond of love in the fulfilment of his destiny.

GIRL TO SOLDIER ON LEAVE

I love you - Titan lover,
My own storm-days' Titan.
Greater than the son of Zeus,
I know who I would choose.

Titan - my splendid rebel -
The old Prometheus
Waves like a ghost before your power -
His pangs were joys to yours.

Pallid days arid and wan
Tied your soul fast.
Babel cities' smoky tops
Pressed upon your growth

Weary gyves. What were you,
But a word in the brain's ways,
Or the sleep of Circe's swine?
One gyve holds you yet.

It held you hiddenly on the Somme
Tied from my heart at home.
O must it loosen now? I wish
You were bound with the old old gyves.

Love! you love me - your eyes
Have looked through death at mine.
You have tempted a grave too much.
I let you - I repine.

(38)

Such a dramatic presentation of the soldier unsubstantiated by any

experiential material has led some critics, unable to believe that Rosenberg himself regarded the modern soldier in the same light as Prometheus and Moses, to think this poem is a satire. Commenting on both this poem and 'Soldier Twentieth Century', Silkin writes that Rosenberg was satirizing the unpleasant ...

"... phenomenon that C E Montague recorded in Disenchantment, where women, who before the war were suffragettes, suddenly found the soldier desirable regardless of his personal quality. What attracted them seems to have been the generalized image of his predatoriness and power, his heroic dimensions which the war, of course, and his actions in it provided. ... What one reads is not Rosenberg's praise of war but his observation of a woman's distorted view of the soldier."

(39)

There seems to be very little evidence to support Silkin's conclusion that this poem is a satire. The girl's passion comes across humanly and poignantly, wholly different from the angry bitterness of Sassoon's attacks on women, and certainly from the presentation of women in Rosenberg's own "jingo spasm" when he was lampooning the idea of their being the makers of heroes:

Glory! Glory! glory
British women, in your wombs you plotted
This monstrous growth of glory, this marvellous glory.

(40)

Silkin's reading of the poem also ignores the fact, often repeated and pointed to in this chapter, that Rosenberg frequently referred to the soldier in heroic terms in his war poems. This, combined with the similarities of the Titan lover to Moses, a creation that Rosenberg intended to be regarded as admirable, make it unlikely that this poem was written as a satire. However, the lack of anything concrete to underpin the exaggerated heroic image, which has led Silkin and others

(39) Jon Silkin : Out of Battle : The Poetry of the Great War
(OUP London 1972) pp.294-5

(40) Isaac Rosenberg : Letter to Rodker in Collected Works p.251

to misinterpret the poem in the way they do, does again bring to the fore the weakness of Rosenberg's conception of the soldier. The sense of duty that is at the heart of the heroic code and that finds expression in 'Girl to Soldier on Leave', particularly in the last two verses, also has a precedent in Rosenberg's earlier war poetry.

'Home-Thoughts from France', written in late 1916, is in many ways the most moving of Rosenberg's war poems for it, in a saddened, gentler form, affirms the sentiments that Richard Lovelace declared so gracefully to his mistress in 'To Lucasta, Going to the Warres'. The comparison is a more apt one than one might suppose, for Rosenberg's poem shares with the seventeenth-century work a delicacy of feeling, and the expression of a complexity of emotion through simple images:

HOME-THOUGHTS FROM FRANCE

Wan, fragile faces of joy!
Pitiful mouths that strive
To light with smiles the place
We dream we walk alive.

To you I stretch my hands
Hands shut in pitiless trance
In the land of ruin and woe,
The desolate land of France.

Dear faces startled and shaken,
Out of wild dust and sounds
You yearn to me, lure and sadden
My heart with futile bounds.

(41)

Much of the effect of this poem comes from Rosenberg's skilful use of antithesis. Through it in the first verse he expresses the effort of those who love the soldier to appear cheerful despite their anguish at his going. The poignancy of their struggle is heightened by his

focussing on their faces, reflecting the way they float into his mind. His complex response to that vision is caught in the antithetical gestures of the hands - the stretching out of the hands conveys his yearning to be with those at home and for their love, but the pitilessness of the shut hands conveys his rejection of the ties of love and his acceptance that he, as a soldier, is on his destined course, from which there can be no turning back. This understanding of the poem is confirmed by the final verse, where the bounds of love are, in the circumstances, futile, saddening ones, which can and must no longer bind the soldier. The heroic virtue that Rosenberg is referring to here was later described by Lord Moran as the "cold choice between two alternatives, the fixed resolve not to quit; an act of renunciation which must be made not once but many times by the power of the will." (42)

A testimony to Rosenberg's own resolution and courage is that, despite the enervating effects of what was to be twenty-two months of service in the trenches, he kept on struggling to sustain his poetic response to the war. During the terrible winter of 1917-8 he began to fear that the combined effects of the war and the exposure were devastating this response, and, even more than usual, he deprecated what he was producing. "Did I send you a little poem, 'The Burning of the Temple'?" he wrote to Miss Seaton. "I thought it was poor, or rather, difficult in expression ..." (43) "I wrote a slight poem which I will send in the next letter" (44) he wrote to his brother Dave of the striking 'The Destruction of Jerusalem by the

(42) Lord Moran : The Anatomy of Courage (Constable, London 1945) p.67

(43) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.270

(44) *ibid.*

Babylonian Hordes', and, to Marsh, of his last poem, 'Through These Pale Cold Days': "Here's just a slight thing." (45)

Rosenberg's use of the word 'slight' itself implies one of the reasons that he was so dismissive of these poems: his dissatisfaction with them arises from his pre-occupation with producing a work of an epic heroic standard. One recalls that, incredibly, after enduring twenty months of trench warfare, he wanted to write a "battle song" but could "think of nothing noble or weighty enough. (*)

Despite their being about the Babylonian destruction, the three short poems Rosenberg did write in 1918 certainly were more in tune with the times and, surely, also with his feelings and experience than would have been the case in the more epic and heroic work he thought he should be producing. His apprehension of the desolation and of the vastness of the destruction of that period of the war, and their effect on the human spirit are conveyed dramatically by the Hebraic analogy, but what is of particular interest for this study of the heroic element of Rosenberg's vision of the war is, that in the first two poems there is a strong re-affirmation of the theme of Moses - the glory of the creative energy that generates new life.

In 'The Burning of the Temple', the subject is the mortality of Solomon's splendour:

(45) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.272

(*) See p.114 above.

His dreams go out in smoke,
 His days he let not pass
 And sculptured here are broke
 Are charred as the burnt grass
 Gone as his mouth's last sighs.

(46)

However, there can be no denying Rosenberg's fierce excitement at the overthrow of an old order and at the enormity of the destruction, conveyed by the magnificent, apocalyptic imagery and the drama of the rhetorical questions in the second verse:

Or hath the sun plunged down?
 What is this molten gold -
 These thundering fires blown
 Through heaven - where the smoke rolled?
 Again the great king dies.

(47)

Nor can it be denied that Rosenberg was stirred by the agents of this destruction, the Babylonian warriors, for in the following poem, 'The Destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian Hordes', he portrays them as being altogether impressive:

They left their Babylon bare
 Of all its tall men.
 Of all its proud horses;
 They made for Lebanon.

And shadowy sowers went
 Before their spears to sow
 The fruit whose taste is ash
 For Judah's soul to know.

They who bowed to the Bull god
 Whose wings roofed Babylon,
 In endless hosts darkened
 The bright-heavened Lebanon.

They washed their grime in pools
 Where laughing girls forgot
 The wiles they used for Solomon.
 Sweet laughter! remembered not.

Sweet laughter charred in the flame
 That clutched the cloud and earth
 While Solomon's towers crashed between
 The gird of Babylon's mirth.

(48)

However disparaging Rosenberg was about this poem, it is clear that he had much less trouble visualizing the Babylonian warriors than he did the soldiers of his own time. Unlike the unsubstantial "sons of valour" of 'Daughters of War', these Babylonians, in their superb heroic array, in their ruthlessness, and in their virility, are completely vivid.

The opening heroic image of the pride of the Babylonian cavalry and their fierce dedication to their purpose are superbly achieved by the direct simplicity of the statement, reinforced by the repetition and the assonance. The Judaeans' dread of them and an impression of their invincibility are conveyed by the images of the "shadowy sowers" and the "Bull god" in the second and third verses. There is no scriptural or mythical reference to the "shadowy sowers", but they are harbingers of disaster, as sinister and carrying the same aura of menace as the birds of prey that circled Brunanburgh, and as the Valkyries, the choosers of the slain, flying over northern battlefields.

The atmosphere of menace takes on a new dimension with the chilling image of the Bull god. As Silkin has well described, the impression of its huge and terrible energy and its great size and strength are derived from the poet's use of scale. "It is the flesh of a living if mythological creature which 'roofs' the entire city of the Babylonians, themselves conquerors. The discrepancy between a creature and a city is of course immense and it is this Rosenberg uses to

establish his creature's size and power." (49) What this size and power mean to the Judaeans is dramatically conveyed by the great wings that roofed Babylon becoming those that darken the heavens of Lebanon.

Much of the merit of the poem comes from Rosenberg's underpinning of immense mythological images with concrete human ones. The great wings of the Bull god are skilfully merged into the invading army of Babylon and thence into the soldiers themselves washing their battle-stained bodies in the pools of Hebron while flirting with the faithless, laughing girls of Judah. The final impression created by the images of muscular naked bodies, seductive laughter, heat and water set against the background of the devastation of Jerusalem is an intensely vital one, arresting in its sensuality and cruelty. There can be no direct reference to the First World War in this poem, but Rosenberg's fascination with power and energy - so evident here - may have been a reaction to the stagnation and drudgery of the ordinary soldiers' existence in the trenches, and their powerlessness to change any particle of it.

That it was despair and frustration with his own situation which made Rosenberg recall one of the most despairing periods in Jewish history is borne out by the last poem in this Babylonian trilogy, the last poem Rosenberg ever wrote. The title, 'Through These Pale Cold Days', clearly makes a contemporary reference, and thus the terrible bleakness of the concluding lines of the poem:

They leave these blond still days
 In dust behind their tread
 They see with living eyes
 How long they have been dead.

(50)

This is a revelation of Rosenberg's mood in March 1918, as well as being a sensitive imagining of the mood of the Jews exiled in Babylon three thousand years before.

Earlier, it was suggested that these poems extend the theme of 'Moses'. In the first two poems, Rosenberg has described the unleashing of a huge destructive energy such as that embodied in Moses, but whereas at the period of the war in which he wrote the play one felt that he saw himself and his fellow soldiers as being part of that energy, in these poems he seems to be identifying with the defeated Jews - an impression that is substantiated by 'Through These Pale Cold Days'.

Rosenberg's consciousness of the vast might of war is also the informing power of The Unicorn, a playlet which, in its final (late 1917) draft is more or less complete, but which he planned to expand into his major work on the war: "If I am lucky, and come off undamaged," he wrote to Miss Seaton in March 1918, "I mean to put all my innermost experiences into the 'Unicorn'. I want it to symbolize the war and all the devastating forces let loose by an ambitious and unscrupulous will." (51) This explanation might give the reader the idea that Rosenberg intended to weave details of his experience of trench warfare into a mythical framework, but this apparently did not occur to him, if The Unicorn in its present state is, at least, an

(50) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.117

(51) op cit. p.270

indication of how he would ultimately treat war. He works wholly in mythic terms, employing an adaptation of an Hebraic myth similar to 'The Rape of the Sabine Women' to express his understanding of the conflict. Far from incorporating any experiential material, he seems to have deliberately removed it. He cut, for instance, a passage from an earlier version of the play The Amulet which vividly evokes his own frequent experience of pushing a limber out of deep mud.

His description of what he intended The Unicorn to symbolize also obscures a second weakness of this play, which has been referred to in the introduction to this chapter. From his words: "all the devastating forces let loose by an ambitious and unscrupulous will", one might suppose that he intended to build on the understanding of war which he had come to through his long term in the trenches; the vision expressed in 'Dead Man's Dump' of a ruthless, malign energy unwittingly set in motion by man. Yet, when one turns to what he actually wrote, one realizes that he was still caught up in the 'Moses' conception of war as a great purging force and of the soldier as its heroic instrument.

It is a measure of Rosenberg's objectivity and of his epic frame of mind that he could continue to view war in such a sanguine manner, but, as has been pointed out above, it is a conception of war that seems to be wholly at variance with the experience of it.

Given the theme of The Unicorn, which is the regeneration of a dying race brought about by the violent abduction of the women of another people, it seems extraordinary that Rosenberg, who became appalled at the devastating effects that trench warfare had on the creative spirit, should have felt that it was an apt symbol of the

First World War. His letters over the last few months of his life are filled with fear that he was being made dull and insensitive by the drudgery of war, and in particular in one comment that he makes about Shakespeare he reveals his agonized awareness of how destructive war is to the artist: "And that old hawker of immortality how glad one feels, he is not a witness of these terrible times - he would only have been flung into this terrible distruction [sic], like the rest of us." (52) Moreover, the demoralizing pattern of the war of attrition - futile attempts to wear down the enemy, followed by attacks which brought negligible gains of territory for massive losses of life - was hardly one expressed by the dynamic action of Tel, the hero of The Unicorn, in bringing new life to his people.

If the play is unsatisfactory as a symbol of the First World War, even harder to reconcile is the apparent connection that Rosenberg makes between Tel and the troops in the trenches. That he did intend this connection seems likely, because he has made several changes to his original heroic standard exemplified by Moses, making Tel more representative of the soldiers. The most significant of these changes is that, while Moses arrogates to himself a godlike power which will tear apart Egyptian society and free the Israelites, Tel, like the soldiers, is the instrument of the forces which impel him. He has none of Moses's coolness and clarity when he moves to achieve his object, which for him is the abduction of Lilith. Instead of being in control of his destiny, as Moses is, it is rather the final giving way to an overpowering instinctual need:

(52) Isaac Rosenberg : Letter to R Trevelyan, in Collected Works p.265

Has the storm passed into me,
 What ecstasy, what lightning
 Has touched the lightning in my blood.
 Voluptuous
 Crude vast terrible hunger overpowers ...
 A gap ... a yawning ...
 My blood knocks ... inarticulate to make you understand,
 To shut you in itself
 Uncontrollable. [*He stretches his arms out*]

(53)

Yet, despite the effort to make him more human and less arrogant than Moses, Tel still retains some of the dynamic and superb qualities of the classical hero, and it is these which prevent any significant connection between him and the soldiers of the First World War. Like Moses, he is the destroyer of an old, atrophied society and, at the same time, the saviour of his race. He has the great frame and immense strength proper to a hero. Effortlessly he lifts Saul's cart out of the mud and sweeps up the exhausted Saul, with the same ease with which Moses picked up the fainting Hebrew from under the crane and bore him out of danger. Both Saul and the Hebrew are so deeply affected by the mere touch of the hero that they feel their lives can never be the same again. Tel and Moses share, too, the same inexorable, ruthless quality in the fulfilment of their quests. Moses murders Abinoah; Tel ignores the desperate pleas of Enoch, and deliberately brings about the deaths of Enoch and Saul by driving them to drown themselves in a well.

If, against these images of the classical hero in action, one sets those haunting images of the troops of the First World War which have become familiar from photographs and readings in poetry and prose - of men huddled in trenches, staring bleakly from under tin hats, or struggling to do their duty while enduring the terrible hardships of mud, cold, and lice - then one realizes the

inappropriateness of the relationship which Rosenberg appears to be suggesting in this play. It is a relationship, moreover, that is at variance not only with what the modern reader has learned of the First World War, but also with the insight into war which Rosenberg himself had gained and which is revealed in his great war poems, 'Break of Day in the Trenches' and 'Dead Man's Dump'.

The recollection of these poems returns the reader's attention, in conclusion, to where it should be directed in fairness to Rosenberg's achievement as a war poet. One has seen that, in a manner and idiom remarkably different from that of any other First World War poet, Rosenberg responded with creative excitement to what he described as "the strange and extraordinary new conditions of this life." (*) In his masterpieces he moves with consummate skill from the delineation of the concrete experience to a profound consideration of its generalized significance in relation to his vision of war as the unleashing of a vast destructive energy.

One realizes that the reason why these poems are valuable as works of art, as well as being original insights into the nature of war, is that they obey a primary aesthetic principle which Rosenberg himself had discussed in a lecture on Art which he gave in Cape Town in 1914. He told his audience that a composition is *vital* when "its content is an infinite idea expressed in a definite texture." (54) This is an exact description of the aesthetic process at work in his great war poems, but not of The Unicorn nor of 'Daughters of War', where the intoxication of the infinite idea, rather than the experience which gave rise to it, has filled his whole consciousness.

(*) See p.86

(54) Isaac Rosenberg : Collected Works p.219

CHAPTER 4

David Jones : Part One

There is little in the early life of David Jones to indicate that he was to produce an epic work of remarkable originality and quality. The son of a foreman in a printing firm and an ex-governess, his was an Edwardian lower middle-class background that was too careful of its respectability to encourage an independent outlook in its offspring. Something of this concern for appearances is indicated by the fact that David Jones, who was born and brought up in London, was taught to speak in a refined way, all traces of the speech of Cockney neighbours being pruned by his mother, and that when, aged fourteen, he attended the Camberwell School of Art, his parents insisted that he wore schoolboy's knickerbockers and not the rolled trousers of the other students.

At school he was slow almost to the point of backwardness. His sole interest was drawing animals, but, as he admits and indeed is often the case, the only drawings of "any originality or merit" were his pre-school ones. It was mostly due to his lack of scholastic aptitude that he was sent to Camberwell, where he was only an average student. In the circumstances, the outbreak of war in 1914 and the call for volunteers proved to be a relief, for it freed him from the difficulty of deciding what to do after his unexceptional career as an art student. "I was beginning to wonder," said David Jones in an autobiographical fragment which is revealing of his state of indecision at the time, "what sort of shape the future might have for an artist of no particular qualifications when he left art school." (1)

His attitude to war was the schoolboyish, patriotic one shared by thousands who volunteered, but, unlike those whose initial idealism turned rapidly to anger and revulsion against the war, the experience of the trenches did little to alter his early view. This is indicated in his one attempt at writing about the war a year after he went to France. Only the last year of the war with its wholesale devastation worked a change in him.

Yet, when one looks more closely at this unpromising matrix for a writer of genius, one realizes that, as with Isaac Rosenberg, there is much that would have fostered his wholly independent heroic view of the war.

The earliest memory which he has recorded is significant, because it reveals that, from the beginning, he responded deeply to the heroic. He has described how, when he was three, he heard "the inimitable sound of steel-shod horse hooves and bugles" outside his parents' house, and, rushing from his cot to the window, "saw and heard a thing of great marvel - a troop of horse moving in column to the taratantara of bugles. It was in fact a detachment of the City Imperial Volunteers on a recruitment ride for the war in South Africa. ... But to me, those mounted men were a sight of exceeding wonder." (2)

This early delight in the heroic was stimulated by his discovery of old Welsh poetry, legend, and history, which is infused with a tragic, heroic spirit. His Welsh father had come to London in

(1) David Jones : The Dying Gaul and Other Writings ed. Harman
Grisewood (Faber and Faber, London 1978) p.27

(2) David Jones : 'In Illo Tempore' in The Dying Gaul and Other Writings op.cit. p.

1885, but he remained intensely proud of his Welsh heritage and passed this on to his son, who wrote that, from the age of seven, he "felt Welsh also." James Jones had virtually no knowledge of ancient Welsh tradition, but his son, after his first visit to Wales, was fascinated by it, and thus his boyhood reading included, in translation, The Mabinogion, the Welsh Arthurian cycle, and poetry from the Cynfeirdd period (600-1100) including that of Aneirin and Taliesin and the Gogynfeirddel (1100-1400). (*)

Epitomizing for him this whole tradition, a tradition the fascination of which continued to grow throughout his life, is the fate of Llywelyn ap Gruffud, the last Celtic prince of Wales, who was killed by English forces in a wood in December 1282, thus bringing to an end the line of Cunedda Wledig, which had been established there for eight hundred years. Signifying as it did, then and now, the end of Welsh independence, the death of Llywelyn the Last would always have been regarded with deep emotion by the Welsh, but it is also evident from history and the eulogies and elegies to Llywelyn that he did have genuine heroic qualities of prowess in battle, inspired leadership, generosity, and a magnificent but hopeless defiance of the English determination to dominate Wales. It is this combination which has made him one of the great national heroes of Wales and a figure central to David Jones's conception of heroism. This love and admiration for what he termed "the defeat tradition of the Celts" is evident wherever he is concerned with heroism, and one realizes from his poetry, prose, paintings, inscriptions, and essays that he links the Llywelyn with other doomed heroes, particularly Arthur, Roland, Bran the Blessed, Hector, and Christ. Sometimes this is done in the form of a direct comparison, but more usually, in his poetry, as

(*) See David Jones : The Dying Gaul and Other Writings op.cit. p.31

becomes apparent in the studies of In Parenthesis and Balaam's Ass which follow the present chapter, by means of complex metaphorical reference. The attraction of the defeat tradition was also the reason why he responded so strongly to the statue of the Dying Gaul, which he first saw and drew at Camberwell in 1909. The Roman statue of the Gaulish warrior (*) (3) visually sums up what drew David Jones to this form of heroism, for although the warrior's head and shoulders are bowed and he has collapsed onto his shield, the hard beauty of the body and the graceful disposition of the limbs retain the nobility of the warrior creed. Harman Grisewood, a long-standing and intimate friend of David Jones, well expresses this apprehension of heroism in his introduction to The Dying Gaul and Other Writings:

The role of the conquering hero is well known in literature and art. Poets and painters do most often respond to success whether of power or fashion. ... But David's keenest sympathies were with defeat and with the efforts of the defeated to survive. Achilles was never a hero to David. His heart was with Hector in the dust.

(4)

The mention of the heroes who most moved David Jones suggests something of the eclectic nature of his heroic vision, but it is a vision which does have a very definite Welsh and Mediaeval bias, intimated in René Hague's comment on his friend's love of Wales:

(*) As David Jones reminded his readers in 1959 in a radio broadcast entitled 'The Dying Gaul', this statue has particular significance for the Welsh, because the warrior whom it represents would have been a forebear of the Gauls who settled in Wales in 100 B.C., bringing with them "typically Celtic objects portrayed on this statue" - the gold torque around his neck, oval Celtic war-shield, and narrow, curved war-trumpet. "Sylvester Gerald de Barn in the twelfth century says that when the Welsh attacked the sound of their deep toned trumpets mingled with their harsh cries. You see the Dying Gaul was going West, slowly."

(3) David Jones : Talk, broadcast on 24 April 1959 by the B.B.C. ;
reprinted in The Dying Gaul and Other Writings
op.cit. pp.50-51

It was a great sorrow to David that he was cut off from Wales, but he was cut off from a Wales for which he had no more than a sentimental love. He was widely read in Welsh history, but the Wales he loved ended with the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffyd on 11 December 1282 and reached back into a Wales of myth and not of fact. ... Of modern Wales he had little or no knowledge.

(5)

His range of reference in his poetry of the First World War does reach back to The Iliad and The Bible and as far forward as The Waste Land, incorporating such literary figures as Chaucer, Malory, Dunbar, Shakespeare, Milton, Coleridge, and Eliot, but dominant throughout are references to The Gododin, the Roland epic, and the Arthurian world of Malory and The Mabinogion.

One is struck by René Hague's use of 'sentimental' to describe David Jones's feeling for Wales. In comparison to the deferential - sometimes near reverential - attitude of the other close friends of David Jones, he is very down-to-earth, critical, and, on the whole, the most useful to the critical reader of David Jones's work. For here, despite the fact that he is being overly harsh, he is pointing to a deficiency in his friend's vision which one sees later becoming crucial. 'Sentimental' here does indicate Jones's tendency to be too backward-looking, avoiding the issues with which modern technology confronts the modern writer.

The difficulties that David Jones had with the technological world of the twentieth century, caused by the fact that its nature (for reasons discussed at the end of this chapter) was really beyond his referential scale, did not, however, prevent him from responding to

(4) Harman Grisewood : Introduction to David Jones : The Dying Gaul and Other Writings op.cit. p.11

(5) René Hague : ed. Dai Greatcoat: a Self-Portrait of David Jones in his Letters (Faber and Faber, London 1980) pp.23-24

the atmosphere of tremendous creative excitement and experimentation in the decade that followed the First World War. Herbert Read evokes the time in this extract from an essay on Paul Nash:

... the mood of the artist suddenly released from the limitations and frustrations of war, facing the future in a spirit of new hope and aspiration. The realism of our experience had made us idealists at heart: we bounded forward with renewed confidence, founding magazines, organizing societies and exhibitions, relentlessly experimenting with new forms and techniques. Eliot's first poems had appeared, and Joyce's *Ulysses* was being serialised in *The Egoist*.

(6)

Read's vivid recreation of the artistic mood of the aftermath of the Great War goes far in explaining why David Jones developed a form of writing that is not only uniquely his own but is "unmistakeably of our time." As Philip Pacey, whose phrase I have borrowed, has pointed out, the poets who wrote during the war itself were equipped "only with the lyric forms of the Romantic Movement", while David Jones was obliged to experiment and forge a new style by both the decade itself and by his being able, through the distance in the time from his subject matter, to place the war in a broader, more intricately complex context. (7) The view of Pacey, and others, that Jones learned his writing craft entirely in this period is not, however, quite accurate, for there exist two unpublished pieces which he wrote at approximately the Christmas season of 1916, after two years in the army, which, despite their immaturity and startling openness to some of the worst propaganda of the war, "are both serious attempts at artistic composition, and in them can be recognized the seed from which his later writing was to grow to maturity; the links with history, the pale moon over the desolate valley, the battle in the hot sunshine -

(6) Herbert Read : The Philosophy of Modern Art: Collected Essays
(Faber, London 1964) reprinted 1977, p.178

(7) Philip Pacey : David Jones and Other Wonder Voyagers
(Poetry Wales Press 1982) p.33

but written of in terms of the 'war lords of Odin' and 'Europe prostrate 'neath the iron heel of the Teuton terror.'" (8) René Hague has summed up the principal qualities of the seed which was so splendidly to flower into In Parenthesis, but it is of interest and necessary to examine more fully Somewhere on the Western Front and A French Vision in order to show clearly what was evolved within David Jones in the period after the war.

The reluctance of René Hague and David Jones's literary executors to publish Somewhere on the Western Front, at least in its entirety, is understandable, as a large part of it is a confirmation of reports of "Hun Barbarities in Belgium" related to him by "a fairly well educated French woman in a delightfully charming broken English accent." (9) The interest of this open letter (*) for the study of In Parenthesis and Balaam's Ass lies largely in Jones's description of the French market town, which reveals a delight in variety and in the juxtaposition of ancient and modern which became intrinsic to his later writing on war:

... one sees a Market Square with a Gothic Church - its ancient embattled tower against the sky, a British plane circling above, British staff officers, resplendent in much brass, red tabs etc, easy going French soldiers on leave, perhaps mud covered Tommies straight from the trenches, weary and war-worn, but usually pretty cheery, peasants with baskets of food-stuffs, Roman Priests with parchment-like skin and shabby black cassocks - these latter seem very reminiscent of France long ago.

(10)

(8) René Hague : Dai Greatcoat op.cit. p.89

(9) David Jones : Somewhere on the Western Front (National Library of Wales David Jones paper 1985 purchase, Aberystwyth, Dyfed) p.2

(*) Apparently written for David Jones's father to show people at his work.

(10) Somewhere on the Western Front op.cit. p.3

The reference to the German High Command and the army as "the war lords of Odin", noticed by René Hague, is an indication of David Jones's liking of the grandeur and resonance of heroic diction, for the phrase, contrary to what one might suppose, has no ironic undertones in the way he uses it: "We thought, at least, most of us, that most likely 1916 would see the triumph of the Entente over the war lords of Odin." (11) One realizes, after reading In Parenthesis, that this reference is significant of the vision which was able, at moments(*), to invest the enemy soldiers with an heroic dignity which is deeply moving in its magnanimity.

On the whole, A French Vision, certainly stylistically, more clearly prefigures David Jones's later work. The piece is written as a descriptive essay and thus he can more freely make use of the present tense to communicate the immediacy of the experience. There is, in the variety of voices and the easy slipping back to a description of the chivalric wars of the past, a hint of the supple shape of In Parenthesis, which can, as a recent critic eloquently puts it, "continually dissolve itself in different modes of language, embodying many angles of perception, a series of disparate and subjective impressions." (12)

As well as the earnest voice of David Jones himself, which foreshadows that of Private Ball : "... sandbagging to be done, parapets to be built; enemy artillery is active and accurate", he has caught amusingly, as the excerpts below reveal, both the public school jargon of a young lieutenant, new from Woolwich Royal Academy, and the

(11) Somewhere on the Western Front op.cit. p.1

(*) Particularly in part VII: see, for instance, p.180 and p.182

(12) Elizabeth Ward : David Jones Mythmaker (Manchester UP 1983) p.88

cockney tones of the sergeant, who clearly was to be developed into the bustling Corporal - later Sergeant - Quilter of In Parenthesis:

"Awful bore, this war; what! I was in the middle of a volume entitled 'War is the Necessary Forerunner of Peace and Civilization in all Ages' by Professor -- that talked a lot of drivel about the 'Purifying Fire' of war etc. I'll know what to do with that wretched collection of piffle when I get back, providing the 'Purifying Fire' lets me." (13)

and

"Now then, you! relieve that man on sentry-go. Yes, late orl ready!" (14)

The sensitivity to language which enables David Jones to portray accurately the characteristics of the different modes of speech is evident too in moments of his description of the landscape of war:

In single file one finds oneself trudging along a desolate road, broken ruins stand grim and piteous against the dim light of the evening ... these smashed, wrecked homesteads were once, only a few months back, comfortable homes - contented and happy peasants loving every corner of them.

(15)

Such a description brings strongly to mind David Jones's later recollection of "the lament of Llywelyn's bard for the dead prince when he speaks of the calcined track of the burnt out homesteads and the Welsh lands made waste." (16)

The grip that chivalric warfare exerted on the mind of David Jones, which forms so integral a part of his vision of war, is

(13) A French Vision op.cit. p.2

(14) op.cit. p.3

(15) op.cit. p.1

(16) Epoch and Artist op.cit. p.226.

See also Joseph Clancy : The Earliest Welsh Poetry p.172

manifest in this description, of an Agincourt-like battle, which begins with disparaging comments on modern war:

It is an awful business, this wretched devastation, this wholesale butchery. If one had lived in the old days, war was so different then! And one mentally pictures a sunlit valley; on either slope, massed squadrons of emblazoned chivalry with lances couched; and behind, bowmen armed 'cap à pie' with short sword and buckler. Suddenly the bowmen, with a fierce and mighty cry, charge madly to the valley, and the arrows fly thick and fast! ... the stunning fanfare of the heralds' trumpets, to have seen the pennons dancing in the sunlight."

(17)

One sees in this passage a conventional use of the past to make vivid the ugliness and lack of chivalry in modern war, but in what follows one realizes that David Jones is doing something very different - he is seeing in the aftermath of that heroic battle of the past a unity with the aftermath of a contemporary battle, a unity which he reinforces by his adaptation of the refrain 'Was it worth it?' that refers to the toils and hardships of the modern soldier:

And now the vision passes. Night falls, and another and far different scene presents itself. The same valley lit by the pale moon; the groans of the wounded and the dying break the silence. "Was it worth it for these men?"

(18)

This short passage is, then, the first manifestation of the style which would, in the ten ensuing years, develop into the flexible, densely allusive style of In Parenthesis, which seeks, among other things, to establish an identity between the endurance, courage, suffering and comradeship of the warrior and that of the modern infantryman.

(17) A French Vision op.cit. pp.2-3

(18) op.cit. p.3

Immature though A French Vision is, there is a constant effort to shape and balance it, evident in David Jones's carefully contrived use of the refrain "Is it worth it?", which ends climactically with: "the trench is still cold and wet, eyes still ache and hands freeze. But it's worth it!" (19) Of his later art Jones was always to speak of the "making" of it, whether it were a painting, drawing, or a writing, thus indicating his belief in the imperative of the artist's regarding himself first as a craftsman. This perception is expressed explicitly in many of his essays and letters:

... round about 1924-6 I was at last understanding something of the nature of the particular 'carpentry' which most sorted with my inclinations and limitations. And in so far as I had come to that understanding, I owe a great debt to the few years at Ditchling with Eric Gill and his associates.

(20)

As the last sentence emphasizes, David Jones himself ascribed his view of the artist very largely to the influence of Eric Gill and the Ditchling community, of which he was a member from 1922 to 1926. The importance of Gill's and his associates' influence should not be underestimated, but A French Vision indicates that they, rather than initiating a perception of art, were confirming and developing a perception already nascent in David Jones.

The part of Gill's philosophy that was so in accord with the intuition of David Jones took its inspiration from a translation of the treatise Art et Scholastique, by the Roman Catholic, twentieth-century philosopher Jacques Maritain. This work comments on the artist of the Middle Ages and the modern artist engendered by the Renaissance in the following terms:

(19) A French Vision op.cit. p.3

Note that in the original text there is triple underlining.

(20) Epoch and Artist op.cit. pp.29-30

In the powerfully social structure of medieval civilization the artist had only the rank of artisan, and every kind of anarchical development was forbidden his individualism because a natural social discipline imposed on him from the outside certain limiting conditions. He did not work for the rich and fashionable and for the merchants, but for the faithful; it was his mission to house their prayers, to instruct their intelligences, to delight their souls and their eyes. Matchless epoch, in which an ingenuous people was formed in beauty without even realizing it, just as the perfect religious ought to pray without knowing that he is praying. ...

Man created more beautiful things in those days, and he adored himself less. The blessed humility in which the artist was placed exalted his strength and freedom. The Renaissance was to drive the artist mad, and to make of him the most miserable of men - at the very moment when the world was to become less habitable for him - by revealing to him his own peculiar grandeur and by letting loose on him the wild beast Beauty, which Faith had kept enchanted and led after it, docile.

(21)

David Jones, in accordance with more orthodox Dominican thinking, never saw the Renaissance and what followed with the same abhorrence as Jacques Maritain or Eric Gill who, according to René Hague, his son-in-law, used Art and Scholasticism as a sort of textbook on which he hung an exposition covering religion, the arts, the whole of human life.(22) Nevertheless, David Jones was deeply influenced by this work, for, in addition to confirming his idea of the artist, it provided an intellectual basis for an inherent distrust of modernity and technology (referred to earlier in this chapter) which had been greatly reinforced by his experience of the horror of warfare's becoming much more technological after the Battle of the Somme.

(21) Jacques Maritain : Art et Scholastique trans. Joseph W Evans as Art and Scholasticism (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1962) pp.21-2

n.b. The translation used by the Ditchling community was a highly idiosyncratic one by Hilary Peplar, printed at Ditchling on hand-made paper. Since only a hundred copies were produced in 1921, it is now, unfortunately, unavailable.

(22) Quoted by Douglas Attwater : A Cell of Good Living: The Life, Works and Opinions of Eric Gill p.97

As indicated by his membership of the lay Dominican community of Ditchling and by his response to Maritain, David Jones was deeply committed to Roman Catholicism. He had been formally confirmed in that faith in 1921, but his conversion began in the trenches with the (for him) extraordinary and unforgettable glimpse, through a crack in the wall of a battered shed very close to the front line, of some "toughs", including "the Old Sweat Mulligan", receiving Mass. Fifty-seven years later he was to recall that moment with a clarity and a sense of awe which reveal, better than anything else which he wrote about his religious belief, how integral a part of his being it became then, and was to remain throughout his life:

What I saw through that gap in the wall was not the dim emptiness I had expected but the back of a sacerdos in a gilt-hued planeta, two points of flickering candlelight no doubt lent an extra sense of goldness to the vestment and a golden warmth seemed, by the same agency, to lend the white altar cloths and the white linen of the celebrant's alb, amice and mantle. (sic) You can imagine what a great marvel it was for me to see through that chink in the wall, and kneeling in the hay beneath the improvised mensa were a few huddled figures in khaki.

(23)

The delight in formal religious sacrament and ritual, so obvious in this passage, was gradually to be extended to everything which David Jones held to be good. As early as 1919, when he left the Army and went to the Westminster School of Art, one sees him assimilating his enthusiasm for certain Post-Impressionist ideas with his understanding of the Eucharistic Sacraments:

When I re-commenced my studies as an art-student, my fellow students and I wasted a good deal of our time (I hope art students are still so occupied) discussing, not without heat, the 'nature of art'. ... For one reason or another certain queries touching what Christians did or did not assert with regard to

(23) David Jones : Dai Greatcoat op.cit. p.249

(Note that, in his letters, David Jones occasionally writes in a somewhat fragmented way.)

the eucharist were at that time much in my mind, and though I in no way connected these queries with queries concerning the arts, I sometimes found myself thinking of the two matters together. The question of analogy seemed not to occur until certain Post-Impressionist theories began to bulk larger in our student conversation. Then, with relative suddenness, the analogy between what we called 'the Arts' and the things Christians called the eucharistic signs became (if still but vaguely) apparent. It became increasingly evident that this analogy applied to the whole gamut of 'making'.

(24)

The difficulty of this truly Catholic view of man's activity, as David Jones himself fully recognized, is the definition of what is good and thus a sacrament, which has been defined as an outward visible sign of inward spiritual grace. Throughout his life he was to attempt to clarify for himself this question of outward visible signs, or *signa*, and, continually, he was to come up against the problems created by his suspicion of modern technology. Probably his most explicit statement of these problems and of the nature and significance of *signa* is contained in the unexpected form of 'A Christmas Message', which he wrote for *The Catholic Herald* in 1960. Using as his starting-point the Roman Catholic practice of lighting a votive candle from another burning in the church, he reveals his belief in the congruency of such an act with human nature, but, as he goes on to show by his use of a quotation from an English folk-song and by his 'modern' adaptation of the lines, it is a congruency which is not possible with the technological marvels of this age:

Neither fire-light nor candle-light
Can ease my heart's despair.

When the poem was made the poet's mind went instinctively to two everyday, familiar and necessary utilities, as to images which ought to offer some consolation, not to the body, but to a heart in despair. That is to say the technics of the then contemporary world were in easy alignment.

It is as though we, with equal spontaneity and naturalness, were able to say in expressing our griefs something of this sort:

Neither neon light nor radiant heat
Can ease my heart's despair.

In so far as we don't seem able to do this, it looks as though an estrangement must have occurred between our characteristic artefacts and ourselves. A defect of some sort must have accompanied our tremendous and fascinating, if also horrific technological advance. Until that estrangement is somehow overcome, the dichotomy which I have tried to indicate would remain.

(25)

In David Jones's poetry of the First World War the significance of this sense of dichotomy - between a period when one could find a possibility for creatureliness in the lives of the soldiers in the trenches and a period when technology had made such a state impossible - becomes profound. In the style of warfare which ended with the Battle of the Somme in 1916 he could find conditions which permitted a creatureliness: "the intimate, continuing domestic life of small contingents of men, within whose structure Roland could find, and, for a reasonable while, enjoy his Oliver. In the earlier months there was a certain attractive amateurishness, and elbow room for idiosyncrasy that connected one with a less exacting past." (26) Thus he could, from instances of behaviour which he saw were in themselves *signa* (such as: "Lectures on hygiene by the medical officer, who was popular, who glossed his technical discourses with every lewdness, whose heroism and humanity reached toward sanctity ..." (27)), 'make' In Parenthesis, which is, from beginning to end, a *signum* of great beauty, the sum of many *signa*. In the wholesale, mechanized slaughter and terrible, devastated landscapes of the Post-Somme period of the war, he could find no such possibility of

(25) David Jones : The Dying Gaul op.cit. p.171

(26) In Parenthesis op.cit. Preface, p.ix

(27) op.cit. p.13

creatureliness, and thus, despite enormous effort and despite passages of original and powerful writing unsurpassed in the literature of the First World War, Balaam's Ass remains a fragment, and deficient as a *signum*.

The example given above from the text of In Parenthesis is of additional significance, for it alerts one to the all-important fact that David Jones's understanding of heroism is inextricably linked to his sacramental religious belief. One realizes that it was very largely his being a Roman Catholic, and particularly a Dominican Catholic, that made him able to discern heroism in seemingly ordinary human behaviour, and to celebrate it with a complete and moving conviction.

He makes the conventional sign
and there is the deeply inward effort of spent men who
would
make response for him,
and take it at the double.

(2)

Moments later, a different aspect of heroism is revealed in the description of the reaction to the death of Mr Jenkins. With the utmost economy, effected mostly by change of rhythm in the sentence, Jones demonstrates the superb discipline of the Royal Welch under fire, in the action of Sergeant Quilter moving into command:

Then stretch still where weeds pattern the chalk
predella - where it rises to his wire - and Sergeant T.
Quilter takes over.

(3)

As well as discerning heroic qualities in the conduct of the soldiers in battle, Jones also finds heroes in the unlikely form of men bailing water out of flooded trenches, whom he likens to one of the great warriors of the Gododin, Ewein; or in the sixty-two year-old coal miner, Usk Adams, who had lied about his age when enlisting, and who somehow keeps up with "these pups"(4), while defiantly contending with the freezing cold, which turns his old legs to wood.

But while Jones makes it possible for us to see a manifestation of the heroic spirit in the First World War, the problem, as he himself was aware, was that even before the Battle of the Somme there were areas of disparity between this conflict and the wars of the past.

(2) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.166

(3) *ibid.*

(4) *op.cit.* p.53

Unlike the warriors celebrated in the past, who were wholly committed to fulfilling the warlike ambitions of their chieftains, the combatant troops of the First World War felt alienated from the Staff and other organizers of war. When a staff officer is hit while in the trenches, his death is overlooked in the general amazement that he should be there at all:

What brought him to this type of place, why his immaculate legs should carry him, jodhpurs and all, so far from his proper sphere, you simply can't conceive.

(5)

The emphasis put on the immaculate jodhpured legs is humorous, and this humour in the context of death demonstrates how unreal the staff officers were to the troops. In battle, the barrier between the two worlds is stressed by the mention of the staff officers as "the tunicled functionaries ... legging it to a safe distance" as the troops go over the top, and by the description of the appearance, after the attack, of the brigadier and the colonel, munching chocolate. One can imagine when such insouciance in a tense moment would be admirable, but here it is appallingly insensitive, as Jones makes clear by the sarcasm of the chivalric opening: "Bring meats proper to great lords in harness" (6), and by the contrast between their munching chocolate and the anguished cries of the wounded for water and food.

I say Calthrop, have a bite of this perfectly good chocolate
you can eat the stuff with your beaver up, this Jackerie
knows quite well that organizing brains must be adequately
nourished

But O Dear God and suffering Jesus
why dont they bring water from a well ...

(7)

(5) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.87

(6) op.cit. p.173

(7) *ibid.*

By establishing the gulf between the combatants and non-combatants, Jones showed that there could be no sharing of each other's aims and ideals. The Staff view the war as a technological problem, "Brigade will consolidate positions on line: - V,Y,O & K." (8), but it is the soldiers who pay the terrible human cost of such an order. Yet, in their efforts to do their duty decently at this and other times, Jones saw heroism in them, and a continuation of the tradition of the stand at Thermopylae, the resistance at Maldon, and the charge at Sebastopol. The troops of the First World War differ from the warriors of the past, whose aims usually coincided to a reasonable degree with those of the organizers of war, but it is David Jones's achievement that he can show that they are no less heroic.

Another major way in which the troops differ from those of the past, and which would at first seem to disqualify them from being seen as heroes, is that they had no physical control over their situation. The heroes of history and legend believed that through the force of their arms and their courage they could win a victory, but the enormous mechanical destruction of the Great War made it obvious to all but the organizers that the prowess of the troops counted for nothing. David Jones makes this very clear by stressing the terrible riving power of the war, and the men's physical helplessness against it; but he shows that they can have a mental control of their situation, and it is largely in this that the troops are heroic. Their control comes from their ability to bring a humanness and a humanity into the trenches "and to make order for however brief a time and in whatever wilderness." (9)

(8) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.22

(9) *ibid.*

The feeling that the troops, when they try to create order in impossible circumstances, are responding to the traditions of an ancient and venerable culture comes from the fact that the whole action of In Parenthesis is set in an historic, legendary framework. Thus, everything that is said or done has a resonance in an heroic past. Temporary unpaid Lance-Corporal Aneirin Lewis's care for "the discipline of the wars" recalls the similarly meticulous and endearing Captain Fluellen of Henry V's army at Agincourt, and beyond that, the whole Welsh heroic tradition. It is a tradition, one recalls, that is as much British as it is Welsh, because its central heroes, King Arthur, Brân, Llewellyn, and the Gododin war-band, were not confined to Wales, but ruled, lived in, or ranged over England, Scotland, and Ireland as well.

There is such an interweaving of the heroic legendary material with the contemporary in In Parenthesis that it is difficult to isolate precisely the effect of any one source, but since Jones refers to the lines from The Gododin that preface each of the seven sections of his work as 'texts', he clearly felt it important that the reader see significant parallels between the situation of the Royal Welch Fusiliers and that of the three hundred warriors of Mynyddog. It will be recalled from the introductory chapter that this sixth-century heroic poem, in the form of a series of elegiac lays, recounts the tale of how three hundred fine warriors (and their retinues) of the Celtic chieftain, Mynyddog, marched from Biddyn (Edinburgh) to Catraeth in Yorkshire to annihilate the heathen Saxons, but were, instead, annihilated by them. Only the poet, Aneirin, and three warriors escaped.

Although The Gododin does not have a narrative structure, the whole fateful story is unfolded through a series of flashbacks and comments amidst the elegy. The 1915 London-Welsh Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers had experience of battle similar to that of their sixth-century counterparts. They too went through a year's training, at the end of which they donned their war gear and moved to the scene of battle. There, after a short initiation period, they were sent into the attack, and, despite their discipline and heroic effort while under fire, almost all were killed.

As well as bringing resonance to the action of each part of In Parenthesis, the epigraphs from The Gododin focus the reader's attention on what is significant. In the First Part, the march of the Royal Welch Fusiliers from the training camp to Southampton is given an epic dimension by its being paralleled by the disciplined march of Mynyddog's warriors:

Men marched, they kept equal step
 Men marched, they had been nurtured together.
 (10)

These lines act almost as a refrain in the original poem, and here too, at the beginning of In Parenthesis, they serve to point to two heroic characteristics that are to be developed later: the admirable discipline of this battalion, and their comradeship.

In Part Two, the epigraph is taken from the heroic boast of the warriors in the mead-hall, who envisage the whole course of the martial activity ahead of them: the preparation for war, including

(10) Note that all references from The Gododin in this chapter come from The Book of Aneirin Commentary and translation by E Anwyl, *Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* Session 1909 Stanzas 72-3, because it is this translation which was used by David Jones.

putting on their war gear; the riding into battle; and, finally, the slaughter of hundreds of Saxons. In the text of In Parenthesis, the heroic boast takes the form of the excited talk of the inexperienced troops discussing the snippets of information and mis-information concerning their movement to the Front Line, which they have gathered from overhearing the talk of their officers: "Up the line on Thursday afternoon - Monday - Thursday morning - Saturday night - back to the Base - back to England, back to England - another part of the field - Corporal B. just said so - ..." (11) They too put on their battle raiment, and "the soft clean fur of their jerkins, which, yesterday brought from Ordnance, lent them an unexpected contour and texture, and a rightness ..." (12) The approving tone of Jones's description shows that he did not feel that these twentieth-century troops looked any the less heroic or fit for battle than their more splendidly clad, legendary predecessors. They do measure up, and, indeed, there is a suggestion that they are superior to the bloodthirsty Gododin. This suggestion comes from the fact that, although Jones echoes the heroic boast by the circulation of rumours in the camp, there is no mention of the killing that they will have to do. This hint of a different attitude to killing is reinforced by the graphic description, at the end of Part Two, of mangolds shattered by high-explosive: "a great many mangolds, uprooted, pulped, congealed with chemical earth." (13) Underlying this is a sense of being appalled by the needless destruction, and this anticipates the feeling at the end, when human beings, not vegetables, are pulped, congealed with chemical earth, and spattered.

(11) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.14

(12) op.cit. p.17.

(13) op.cit. p.24

The lines that form the epigraph to Part Three are taken from the beginning of The Gododin, and come from the first of a chain of six stanzas, all beginning : "Men went to Catraeth". They describe the flamboyant march of the three hundred, splendidly attired in their dark blue raiment and torques of gold, and, because they were buoyed up by the golden mead, in hilarious and confident mood:

Men went to Catraeth, familiar with laughter
The old, the young, the strong, the weak.

(14)

In contrast to "the drunken three hundred" at Catraeth, as Jones describes them in his notes, the Royal Welch grope their way up to the Front Line under cover of darkness, in a state of silent exhaustion and, whatever their doubts are, they flounder through the muddy maze with unquestioning obedience. There is no laughter, nothing to buoy them up but permission to smoke a damp cigarette for a few minutes, and the concern of the man behind when one falls. Theirs is a dark, floundering journey into a new, sinister world, and one feels something of the men's great need for human contact. It is a need which seems to make the boisterous comradeship of the Gododin rather paltry: for, in the midst of such eeriness and menace, the only sanity is found in contact with familiar human things: the sound of a voice passing back an instruction, calling "goodnight", or singing; the hand that hauls a mate out of a mudhole; or the smell of burning wood.

The second line of the epigraph, however, does give emphasis to the disparate nature of the troops. They range from the very young Lieutenant Jenkins, who has the idealistic profile of Uccello's young blond squire in 'The Rout of San Romano', and who whistles Dixieland under his breath when he inspects rifles, to sixty-

two-year-old Usk Adams, who knows darker, more sodden ways in the Welsh coal mines than the trenches he stumbles down. They range from the imaginative Private Ball, who sees an Excalibur in a piece of iron sticking up out of a waterlogged hole, to Corporal Quilter, who thinks only of the immediate and practical.

If the quiet movement of the Welch Fusiliers up to the Front Line seems in strong contrast to the martial array of the Gododin war-band riding to battle, the epigraph to Part Four reflects perfectly the spirit and mood of Private Ball's first awakening in the trenches, and of his early-morning sentry-duty. The first two lines of the epigraph come from the elegy to the gentle Keredic, "the lover of honoured song... who like a man kept his post" and "of set purpose, he defended the place assigned him." (15) Private Ball, "his eyes fast on his periscope, pathetically conscientious of his orders" (16) seems a worthy successor. He too delights in song, and feels that 'Casey Jones' played on the mouth organ and sung by four voices is "honouring of the morning." However, the dominant note of the elegy is one of wistfulness and sadness, and this is echoed in the early morning scene that Jones depicts. It opens with a bleak view of the mist-covered German trenches, and the gradual revelation of the bleached forms of Ball and his comrades. They wake painfully, staring into the mist "as grievous invalids watch the returning light pale-bright the ruckled counterpane, see their uneased bodies only newly clear; fearful to know afresh their ill condition ..." (17) The order to clean their mud-caked rifles, when there is no hot water and their fingers are frozen, "seemed to them an enormity and past endurance."

(15) The Gododin op.cit. stanzas 70, 71 and 76

(16) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.71 (17) op.cit. p.61

Dai Greatcoat's magnificent boast is, of course, full of vigour and vaunting splendour, but the elegiac note is never wholly dispelled, because, strong as is the heroism that the images evoke, there remains an awareness of death. For instance, the opening allusion to the Black Prince sets the tone, for, as much as it recalls the Prince's heroic feats at Crécy, that won him his spurs, it also brings back the memory of the Prince's tragic early death.

The sadness of the first section of Part Four deepens to a feeling of desolation in the final section, when the focus moves away from Dai to the whole waterlogged scene of the trenches. Combined with the description of a terrible flooded world are images of Ireland ravaged by the boar Twrch Trwyth, and the "desolated Cantrefs" of Gwydnno swamped by the sea, because the dyke warden did not keep watch.

Part Four completes the troops' winter arrival in the trenches, and when Part Five opens, five months have passed. It is June 1916, just before the Battle of the Somme. This Part is a description of a period at a reserve camp, and, appropriately, Jones has chosen as the text lines from the Gododin that look back to the bright fires and couches covered in white sheepskin in Mynyddog's hall. The 'he' in the epigraph is the kind and courteous warrior, Gereint, who combined his duties as leader in battle of the men of the South with those as Mynyddog's Master of Ceremonies. In comparison to the warriors' hall, Alice and Jacques's estaminet, with its Aisne stove, crowded tables, and abominable beer, seems at first a travesty. But, as at other times, when one thinks initially that Jones intends an ironic or humorous effect, his real intention is paradoxical, for when this passage is examined more closely, the warmth and companionship of the

soldiers are revealed. To them, at least, the periods of respite from the trenches and from the parades, the chance to talk and sing, must have seemed quite as gladdening and refreshing as the periods of respite from training and battle that Mynyddog's warriors had. Later in this section there is a description of another period of respite - when kindly Lieutenant Jenkins allows the platoon to take an extra-long lunch break next to a stream, in the midst of wiring fatigue. The peaceful view of the men lying in the June sun with daisies and buttercups around them is one of the most memorable in the whole poem, especially as such scenes are so rare. The activity of the great hall might have been the highlight of the Celtic warriors' martial life, but to the troops of the Welch Fusiliers similar relaxing activities were moments of rare and sensuous delight. Towards the end of Part Five, however, as the Royal Welch march to the Front, the atmosphere starts to become ominous, with reference to the soldiers' last Wills, the drowned land of Gwaelod, and Rachel weeping for their young men. The feeling of menace is taken up in the epigraph to Part Six, with a return to the refrain "Men marched to Catraeth." This time, however, there is no exclusion of the lines that express the fearful anticipation of battle, and the sense of doom:

Men went to Catraeth as day dawned: their fears disturbed
their peace

Men went to Cattraeth: free of speech was their host
... death's sure meeting place, the goal of their marching.

(18)

Part Six opens to the sound of gunfire, which gradually intensifies as the time for the attack draws nearer, matching the rising fear of the men. Lying in their bivvy watching the flashes from the big guns, Ball and his two friends, sucking Mackintosh's toffees,

(18) The Gododin op.cit. Stanza 64

feel for a moment warm enough and secure enough to liken the spectacle to a show at 'The Alexandra' in Tottenham; but such comfortable musings are not to be permitted for long. Next day many "fears disturbed their peace." The first was the unpleasant hollow tapping sound of the carpenters. Private Saunders compares the hollow sound to the building of some "scaffold for hanging", and substance is given to this frightened speculation by the gloomy report from a company runner that a general had been overheard saying that the coming battle was going to be a "first class bollocks and murdering of Christen men ...". (19)

For a short time, safely out of range of the enemy guns, Privates Saunders, Ball, and Olivier can quell their fear, and discuss the outcome of the battle as they would that of a football match, but when they join the rest of the company at tea-time, they realize from all the nervous discussion and speculation that "everyone is interiorly in as great a misery and unstably set as you are." (20) This fear gets worse as they move up into the line "and talk about impending dooms - it fair gets you in the guts." (21)

At the end of this Part are two sights that bring out the full meaning of the epigraph, and foreshadow what is to happen to the Royal Welch. Both are the result of an unusually accurate salvo from the enemy guns, the modern reply to the heroic boast: "Free of speech was their host." (22) The first sight is the civilian coffins blown from their resting places and mingled with the corpses of the troops;

(19) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.138

(20) op.cit. p.144

(21) op.cit. p.146

(22) The Gododin op.cit. Stanza 64

"these shovelled just into the surface soil like a dog." (23) The second sight is the bodies of the mules hit while pulling the guns into the line: "their tough clipt hides that have a homely texture flayed horribly to make you weep, sunk in their civility of chain and leather." (24) This is an unusual expression of anguish in this carefully modulated poem, and it anticipates the treatment of death that is to come.

Part Seven, the tragic consummation of the process of training and initiation that the troops have undergone, is introduced by the stirring opening line of the reciter's preface: "Gododin I demand thy support." This is, as it was in the seventh century when the reciter rose in the Court, a demand for attention, and a linking of the speaker with the greatness of Aneirin, "the courteous one, the rampart of battle." The following line: "It is our duty to sing: a meeting place has been found" (25) expresses the deep compulsion to praise his comrades that Jones felt. The remainder of the passage from which the epigraph is taken reveals more clearly the way Jones treats the Battle of Mametz Wood in In Parenthesis. The battle scenes from both The Gododin and In Parenthesis are a fusion of graphic description of carnage, tribute to the heroism of the fighters, and a lament for their untimely end. The horrible sight of Cynon being eaten by the grey eagles - "his loppings are their best meat" (26) - is equalled by the more clinical horror of the fate of Wastebottom: "the whinnying splinter razored diagonal and mess-tin fragments drove inward and toxined underwear." (27) The prowess of Gwaedneth, "of splendid valour who longed for the red reaping of war", finds its

(23) In Parenthesis p.149 (24) *ibid.*

(25) The Gododin op.cit. Stanza 82 (26) *ibid.*

(27) In Parenthesis p.158

parallel in the praise of the green-gilled corporal whose "words cut away smartly, with attention to the prescribed form, so that when he said do this they bloody did it" (28), who pulled together the remains of the bewildered platoon, restoring them to an effective fighting force. Finally, the simple lament, "there came not on the side of Britons to Gododin a man better than Cynon", is echoed by the poignancy of the tribute of the Queen of the Woods: "She carries to Aneirin-in-the-nullah a rowan sprig, for the glory of Guenedota." (29)

From this discussion of the epigraphs from The Gododin and their application to In Parenthesis, it is evident that David Jones sees correspondences in the situation and the spirit of Mynyddog's three hundred in the sixth century and his own battalion in 1916. It is interesting and relevant to the understanding of Jones's intention that this comparison also places the warriors and battles of the past in a new perspective. The reading of legends, usually in childhood, has tended to make us think that the old martial life was perpetually at a heroic pitch. Jones makes us look back to the warriors and knights and see that they were human. The carousing in the great halls was little different from that of modern infantrymen singing and chatting in a crowded estaminet. When the Gododin rode to battle, they were just as confident, or filled with misgivings, or keen, or fed-up, as the men of Jones's battalion, and thus, when the Gododin are annihilated, their sacrifice is moving, because it is human. This more real view of the Gododin is important to Jones, because he does not want the comparison to ennoble the slaughter on the Western Front. He wishes to demonstrate that the Welch Fusiliers were part of a living

(27) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.172 (28) op.cit. p.186

(29) The Book of Aneirin , original manuscript quoted by Edward Anwyl in his Commentary, op.cit. p.119

and worthy military tradition, not a romantic nor a mythic one. In establishing this, he alters the conventional literary view of the whole of the First World War. Poets, autobiographers, and historians had tended to regard it as a violent disruption of life, unprecedented in the history of the world. Jones saw it as a continuation of the pattern of history, vaster and more terrible, certainly, than any war of the past, but not different in essence. The cry of Aneirin in the Court of Mynyddog, for all to listen to his tribute to the fallen army, lies behind David Jones's dedication: "This writing is for my friends in mind of all common & hidden men and of the secret princes ...".

"What seems to me one of the most significant lines I have put on the title page of this book", writes David Jones laconically of the Welsh sub-title : "seinnyessit e gledyf ym penn mameu" (30) (he made swords ring in mothers' heads). The fact that this is the only untranslated Welsh in the whole poem should alert one to its significance. One recalls that Jones had an expatriate's reverence for Wales and the Welsh language, and although he never could speak Welsh, he had learnt cherished fragments. This is one of them, for it encapsulates for him the antithetical feelings which war arouses - on the one hand, delight in the design of battles and in prowess; and, on the other, the agony and tender concern of mothers who must endure vicariously what is happening to their sons. Both aspects are present in In Parenthesis, but, just as the image of the anxious, loving mother dominates the image of the proud swordsman, so it is the informing power of the poem. A feeling of tenderness and humanity is evident from the first page, in the gentle humour brought about by bathos: "The silence of a high order, full of peril in the breaking of it, like the coming on parade of John Ball"(31), in the motherly, half-amused

(30) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.1

(31) op.cit. p.65

sympathy at the troops' bewilderment when they arrive at the Front Line, "They stood as a lost child stands" (32), in the love and honour with which he regards their deaths, "as undiademmed princes turn their gracious profiles in a hidden seal" (33), and finally, in the lyrical gentleness with which he pays final tribute:

The Queen of the Woods has cut bright boughs of various
flowering. ...

She plaits torques of equal splendour for Mr.Jenkins and
Billy Crower.

Hansel with Gronwy share dog-violets for a palm, where they
lie in serious embrace beneath the twisted tripod.

(34)

While The Gododin provides an heroic framework for the experience of the Royal Welch Fusiliers in 1915 and 1916, allusions to Malory's Morte D'Arthur, The Mabinogion and other Welsh legends, the Chanson de Roland, and Shakespeare's Henry the Fifth are some of the ways in which David Jones embodies the action of these modern troops into the great tradition. The cornerstone of this tradition, and the legends to which he makes most reference, are those concerning King Arthur: why this should be so, Jones makes clear in his preface, when he quotes Christopher Dawson's review of R G Collingwood's Roman and English Settlements:

And if Professor Collingwood is right, and it is the conservatism and loyalty to lost causes of Western Britain, that has given our national tradition its distinctive character, then perhaps the Middle Ages were not far wrong in choosing Arthur, rather than Alfred or Edmund or Harold, as the central figure of the national heroic legend.

(35)

The source of most of the Arthurian material in In Parenthesis is the Morte D'Arthur rather than The Mabinogion, both of

(32) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.65

(33) op.cit. p.184

(34) op.cit. p.18

(35) op.cit. p.xiii

which are linked to the Court of King Arthur. The reason why Jones refers more frequently to Morte D'Arthur is that it is a much more integrated, more comprehensive account than the loosely strung together legends of The Mabinogion. Reference to Malory's great work, and thus to the ordered world of Arthur's Camelot, augments the sense of ordered existence of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. As in Morte D'Arthur, however, there is a poignancy in this attempt to preserve humane and civilized standards, for it is inevitable that they will be destroyed. Another reason for Jones's use of Morte D'Arthur is that Malory's understanding of chivalry was fundamentally martial, not courtly. Modern interest in the affair between Guinevere and Sir Lancelot has led to its being over-emphasized and to a tendency to ignore the fact that Malory's chief delights were the martial virtues of the knights, the elaborate preparations for tournaments and battles, and the vigorous action of the engagements. These give a legendary dimension to the preparations for battle described in Parts Five and Six of In Parenthesis. The Arthurian material in the first half of Jones's great work tends to be more concerned with human behaviour than the supernatural, and much of it is drawn from The Mabinogion. In the two major parts of the poem, Parts Four and Seven, which bring about the culmination of the period of training and of the whole experience of the trenches, Jones brings into play all the varied aspects of the Arthurian legends, to give richness and resonance to these climactic sections. Since a detailed discussion of the effect of these allusions in the whole poem would be beyond the scope of this chapter and of this dissertation, the effect of the Arthurian material in the two major parts only will be commented upon here.

The nature of the first daylight view of the trenches, got by Private Ball and his companions, is set by the title to Part Four:

'King Pellam's Lande'. Wilfred Owen compared a similar view to the face of the moon: "chaotic, crater-ridden, uninhabitable, awful, the abode of madness." (36) Jones's comparison is not as intense, but it is more original, for it carries with it a complex indictment of man. King Pellam's land became a devastated, bleak wasteland because Balin wounded the King with his spear. This brought suffering and death to the guiltless, just as the troops on both sides suffered and died in a war which they had done little to bring about. This idea of wronged innocence, implicit in the title, is reinforced by the opening lines, which come from Malory's description of Lancelot at the Chapel Perilous, "So thus he sorrowed until it was day ..." . Private Ball, on his first morning in the frozen trenches, is as sorrowful and as unsure of himself as Lancelot is, divested of his horse and armour, and cast out of the Chapel Perilous. The difference is, though, that Lancelot's punishment was justified. He had forsworn his loyalty to his king, and had neglected his duties as a knight. Ball, so mindful of his duties as sentry that he will not even glance down to see whether his bundle of dry wood is still there, is "pathetically conscientious of his orders."

The note of sadness set by the opening lines and the Gododin epigraph is amplified into a cry of doom in Dai Greatcoat's heroic boast. The Arthurian legends that form half the material of this boast are mainly responsible for this sense of impending disaster. This is because much of the human interest in both the Morte D'Arthur and The Mabinogion come from the fateful actions of the characters. The first such action with which Dai identifies himself is the slaying of Abel under the green tree. (This was told to Sir

(36) Harold Owen and John Bell (eds.) : The Collected Letters of Wilfred Owen (London 1967) p.430

Galahad during his quest for the Holy Grail.) The tree is the tree of life, but it is also the symbol of the downfall of man, and thus, although Dai might stand with Abel - "I was with Abel when his brother found him" - he will share the fate of Cain.

The second Arthurian allusion also comes from Morte D'Arthur, and it reinforces the images of desolation and disaster of the title: "I was the spear in Balin's hand/ that made waste King Pellam's land." (37) He has gone on from being a passive, horrified onlooker at Abel's murder to being the instrument of disaster. He is the spear that Balin frantically plunged into King Pellam's side, causing the castle and the whole kingdom to crumble. What compounds the horror is that this is the same spear that the Roman legionary thrust into the side of Christ.

The theme of disaster is continued in the adder, the unsuspected catalyst in the Battle of Camlann. It stung a knight on the foot, causing him to draw his sword to despatch it. The drawing of a sword was the signal for battle to begin, and thus came about the undoing of all victorious toil: "In ostium fluminis/ At the four actions in regione Linnuis." (38) All of Arthur's twelve great victories follow, and one notes how Jones's arrangement of the lines emphasizes that, in the end, all "this victorious toil" was reduced to nothing by the adder's sting.

Later in the boast, these victories are shown not only to have been hollow, but full of foreboding in themselves, for they led to Arthur's becoming so filled with pride that he exhumed the head of

(37) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.79

(38) op.cit. p.80

Brân. Arthur, "The Bear of the Island: he broke it in his huge pride, and over-reach of his imperium." (39) According to Welsh legend, Brân the Blessed ordered that his severed head should be buried under the White Tower in London, and there it would act as a charm to repel invaders. Arthur disinterred it, because he wanted to preserve Britain by the "might of his arm alone" and thus, concludes the triad, "came the chief invasions upon the race of Cymry." (40)

In this boast, Brân the guardian of the island, who has in past ages kept "the land inviolate", is the focus of a long desperate prayer to hold back the enemy. The cries:

O let the guardian head
keep back - bind savage sails, lock the shield-wall nourish
the sowing.

...

O Brân lie under,
The chrism'd eye that watches the French-men

...

O blessed head hold the striplings from the narrow sea.

(41)

express the terror of invasion that Dai's ancestors felt as they watched for the long boats. Now they express the same fear of being overwhelmed, and because there is no escape for him and his companions, his prayer has a great sadness. This effect is enhanced by the rhythm and the strong sonic quality of the words. When the stresses fall on the long vowel sounds, they extend them, so that the feeling of desperation is amplified by the actual sound:

Let maimed kings lie - let be
O let the guardian head
Keep back ...

(42)

(39) In Parenthesis p.82

(40) Lady Charlotte Guest : The Mabinogion (London 1877) p.387

(41) In Parenthesis pp.82-83

(42) *ibid.*

The last part of the invocation to Brân is a prayer that he will confuse the tongue of the evil Lord Agravaïne, who made it impossible for Arthur to avoid war against Lancelot. The linking of the legends of the Morte D'Arthur with those of The Mabinogion is extended to the present time in this line:

He urges with repulsive lips, he counsels: he nets us into
expeditionary war.

(43)

'Expeditionary war' is, of course, not a reference to the Battle of Camlann, but to the present war fought on French soil, and 'nets' is an expression of the feeling of the troops that they had been tricked into a war that was foreign and purposeless. The focus of this anger was not the Germans, but those who had inveigled the country into war, and kept it there — the government, the war profiteers, and the Staff — all the powers represented here by the image of Lord Agravaïne, who "urges with repulsive lips" the necessity for war to defend king and country.

The recollections of invasion and disaster that the cry to Brân calls up are extended by the allusion to his sister Branwen, "I knew the smart on Branwen's cheek." (44) She was married to the King of Ireland, who maltreated and insulted her. She called on her brother for help, and after a series of terrible battles, only seven men survived. It is said that when Branwen looked back towards Ireland and realized what destruction she had helped to bring about, she died of grief. The allusion is thus a powerful and complex one, that suggests not only the coming disaster, but the feeling, common to those who fought in that conflict, that nothing justified war.

(43) In Parenthesis pp.82-3

(44) ibid.

The last Arthurian allusion is of special significance to David Jones, because, in the person of Peredur, it provides a link with The Gododin, The Mabinogion, and Morte D'Arthur, all of which carry versions of the story of Percival. Jones looked not only for correspondences between events of the twentieth century and those of the past, but also for those between the events of different societies and ages of the past. The reference in Dai's boast is, however, to Peredur ap Evrawc of The Mabinogion. Because Peredur failed to question certain strange sights, such as a youth with a spear that dripped blood, the kingdom could not be restored to health. This is a return to the wasteland theme - "there's neither steading - nor a roof tree" - and, with some dexterity, Jones makes it also a linking of the old convention of the heroic boast with the present. The words of the Black Maiden derisively berating Peredur:

You ought to ask: Why,
What is this,
What's the meaning of this.

(45)

become Dai's words jeering at his open-mouthed audience. They are prodded into a response: "Cripes a mighty strike me cold", which breaks the spell of the boast for the soldiers, but not for the reader, who cannot, due to the rhythmic intensity of some lines, forget what it foretells: "O Brân lie under."

Just before the end of Dai's boast, David Jones alludes to another famous boast, the one the bard Taliesin made at the Court of King Maelgwin when he wanted to make an impression and to frighten everybody into a proper respect for his bardic powers. This boast occurs in the book of Taliesin at the end of The Mabinogion, and it is

(45) In Parenthesis p.84 (see The Mabinogion p.81

justly celebrated for the grand sweep of its claims, and for the masterly build-up to the climax: "I am Taliesin." Jones says that he had this boast, and others, in mind when he wrote Dai's boast, but the part he uses particularly is Taliesin's claim:

I was with my Lord in the highest sphere
On the fall of Lucifer into the depths of hell:
I have borne a banner before Alexander.

(46)

In In Parenthesis, this is modified to:

I was in Michael's trench when bright Lucifer bulged his
primal salient out.
That caused it,
That upset the joy-cart
and three parts waste.

(47)

In the original, Taliesin's suggestion is that he remains with the victorious Archangel Michael, just as he is with Alexander in his great victories. There is no such suggestion in In Parenthesis - Dai is undone by Lucifer, and must share the hell that is to come. This comparison makes clear how Jones has used an old heroic convention in the context of the First World War. Stirring it undoubtedly is, but it cannot possibly be, as Samuel Rees describes it, "a magnificent set piece of learned braggadocio." (48) There is boasting, but it is a linking of himself with the men and women who in the end brought disaster on the land, and the ultimate effect of the boast is that of a prophecy of doom.

There are only two further Arthurian allusions in Part Four. The first is to Twrch Trwyth, the terrible boar that laid waste

(46) The Mabinogion p.482

(47) In Parenthesis p.84

(48) Samuel Rees : David Jones (Twayne Publishers, Boston 1978) p.63

Ireland and Wales, killing with indifferent ease men, women, and animals. It is a Welsh legend that, more than any other, had a grip on David Jones's imagination at this time. The Boar's vast ability to devastate land; the facility with which it took life, so that even Arthur's greatest warriors were puny against it; the evil of its poison, one whiff of which made the clever Menw sickly for the rest of his days; and the fact that, despite enormous exertion, Arthur failed to conquer it; all these symbolized for Jones the huge and uncontrollable forces of the First World War. Reference to the Boar here is used to convey the sudden terror of high-explosives violently shattering the stillness of the misty morning, and blowing up two 'auxiliaries'. It makes a connection, too, between the blasted scene in the trenches after the shelling with "the broken land by Esgier Oerwel" after the passage of the Boar.

The second allusion is another which Jones was to use repeatedly in his later writings. It is from one of the Welsh triads, and tells of the flooding of the seven cantrefs of Gwaelod. Gwyddno, one of king Arthur's neighbours, ruled over a tract of land bordered by the sea. Seithenin was his dyke warden, who one night got drunk and neglected his charge. The consequence was that the sea broke in, and all Gwyddno's kingdom save a few mountains was lost. The drama of this devastation is brilliantly recreated in the Welsh mind of Lance Corporal Aneirin Lewis, as he helps the platoon prevent the sodden trenches from being swamped: "It may be remembered Seithenin and the desolated cantrefs, the sixteen fortified places, the great cry of the sea, above the sigh of Gwyddno when his entrenchments stove in." (49) Lewis is secretly amused at the comparison, but the tone of his poetry is deeply serious, and augments the theme of desolation. The lyrical

(49) In Parenthesis p.89

beauty of Lewis's description reveals how much he lives in his Welsh heritage. He grieves for the last Welsh ruler, Llewellyn, as though he had just failed to return from a raid: "and he who will not come again from his reconnaissance ... they've given him an ivy crown - ein llyw olaf - whose wounds they do bleed by day and by night in December wood" (50), and for him too "Troy still burns." It burns still for David Jones as well, and although Lance Corporal Lewis is one of the first to be killed, the battle is presented in the way he would have liked. The powerful images are drawn from Welsh legend, and when Jones pays tribute to the dead, he follows the Welsh tradition that bestowed a crown of ivy leaves on the severed head of Llewellyn the Last.

The atmosphere of foreboding that the Arthurian allusions engender in Part Four comes at last to terrible fruition in Part Seven. The first three allusions come from the Mabinogi, Culwch and Olwen, and with great artistry Jones makes them convey the sadness and pathos of the death of Aneurin Lewis, and the appalling power of the weapons that destroyed him. The contrast between the abandoned, mutilated body of Aneurin Lewis, "No one to care there for Aneurin Lewis spilled there", and the gentle poet's mind, who saw the white trefoils that Olwen left when she walked, even on the muddy slats of a trench at Festubert, is almost unbearable, and so too is the harsh insistence on the details of his physical destruction:

... more shaved is he to the bare bone than
Yspaddadan Penkawr.

Properly organized chemists can make more riving power
than ever Twrch Trwyth;
more blistered he is than painted Troy Towers
and unwholer, limb from limb, than any of them fallen at
Catraeth ... (51)

(50) In Parenthesis p.89

(51) op.cit. p.155

There is no more cruel moment in the whole of The Mabinogion than the shaving of the giant Yspaddadan, who "had his beard, skin and flesh clean off to the very bone from ear to ear" (52), and who was dragged off by his hair to execution. There is no more devastating force than Twrch Trwyth, and yet the poor body of Aneirin Lewis is more harmed than that of the giant or of any of those whom the Boar poisoned, burnt, or savaged. The full impact of these comparisons comes at the end of the passage: "... and no maker to contrive his funerary song." (53) This line, and the first: "No one to care there for Aneirin Lewis spilled there" convey the bleak loneliness of his shattered corpse. There is none of the decorum that was accorded the body of a warrior, despite the suffering of Lewis surpassing that of the great heroes of the past.

As the troops rise from the chalk ditch "keeping admirable formation", the machine-gun fire intensifies. The allusions at this climactic moment come from Morte D'Arthur. The first is an echo of Dai's boast: "I was with Abel under the green tree." This time the effect is more direct, for there is a glimpse into the frightened mind of Abel, who knew what Cain was about to do : "had awareness of his dismembering and deep bowelled damage." Abel's fear is the troops' fear, who have as little chance of escaping what is ordained for them as Abel had.

The allusion to Balin is also used with more intensity than it was in the boast. "Who gives a bugger for the Dolorous Stroke?" is a rhetorical question which shows how all-consuming of mind and body was the experience of battle in the First World War. The old griefs

(52) The Mabinogion p.258

(53) In Parenthesis p.155

and concerns of Balin now seem irrelevant, for the men face destructive forces that far exceed what he encountered. David Jones gives us a glimpse of the Great War version of the Dolorous Stroke: "It is a first class bollocks and the murdering of Christen men", as one soldier reported a general as predicting, but the view of the troops as murdered victims is not permitted for long. Jones allows a brief glimpse of them "sunk limply to a heap", then transforms these poor heaps into fallen warriors, by linking them with the heroes of Morte D'Arthur - Tristram, Lamorak de Galis, Balin - and others of history and legend. These were all heroes in the Classic mould; splendid to look upon, brave and dashing, and formidable fighters; but they all suffered untimely death.

Towards the end of Part Seven, as the course of the battle is traced through Ball's experience of it, allusions from Morte D'Arthur are used to emphasize the horror, and to honour the heroic effort of Ball and the remnants of the Royal Welch. The unseen and unheard bullets flying about the dark wood are aptly compared to Garlon's terrible truncheon, that "struck invisible." The eerie feeling that the reference to Garlon engenders is increased by the description, in Malory's language, of the shapes that Ball glimpses in the flash of gunfire:

Who's these thirty in black harness that you could see in
the last flash,
great limbed, and each helmed: ...

(54)

The emphasis on their great limbs and war gear adds to their frightening impression. This is an allusion to the strange knights Lancelot found guarding the Chapel Perilous. His fear is Ball's fear,

(54) In Parenthesis p.180

and the further quotation: "whether I live/ whether I die" shows that Ball's obligation to advance through the shapes takes as much heroic determination as Lancelot showed in bursting through the "grenning and gnasting knights" to fetch the bloody cloth.

Ball's effort and determination is mirrored in that of the company, after Captain Cadwaladr has pulled its few survivors together. Jones conveys both the new sense of discipline and the ebb and flow of the fight, by quoting Malory's ordered prose description of Sir Tristram de Lyones's mighty battle against Sir Elias:

And then he might see sometime the battle was driven a bow draught from the castle and sometime it was at the gates of the castle.

(55)

If The Gododin, the Morte D'Arthur and The Mabinogion are three of David Jones's most significant sources, because they provide a framework for the experience of the Royal Welch in 1916, the large number of other works to which he alludes are also important, for they combine to give the feeling that the Great War was part of a long and extensive tradition.

David Jones's reference to the Chanson de Roland in the preface, and his sensitive response to René Hague's translation in 1937 * , reveal how much he loved the epic, and how considerable a part of his consciousness of war it had become. He alludes to it only

(55) op.cit. p.181; quoted from E Vinaver (ed.) The Works of Sir Thomas Malory (Oxford 1967) p.622

* See 'The Roland Epic and Ourselves' in The Dying Gaul (Faber & Faber, London 1978) p.94

See also 'A Review of The Song of Roland' first published in The Tablet 24 December 1938

in the final part of In Parenthesis, but it is of importance because it adds a further dimension to the sense of doomed heroism brought by the allusions to The Gododin and to the Arthurian legends. Roland and Oliver are going to die in battle - that is made clear early on, when Ganelon, the traitor, connives with the Saracens - but they face their inevitable deaths in a spirit of reckless gaiety that is both foolish and gallant. Roland will not blow his horn to summon Charlemagne to his aid because "he would lose his praise in France." David Jones clearly wishes to evoke something of this gallantry and grace when he describes in the following terms the moment when the Royal Welch go over the top:

Tunicled functionaries signify and clear-voiced heralds cry
and leg it to a safe distance:
leave fairway for the Paladins, and Roland throws a kiss -
they've nabbed his batty for the moppers-up
 and Mr.Jenkins takes them over
and don't bunch on the left
for Christ's sake.

(56)

All the charm of Roland and his love for Oliver have been caught in the gesture of his hand as he canters forward in the vanguard. The memory of Roland's love which these few images awaken makes the subsequent bare statement of Oliver's death very moving:

And in the country of Béarn - Oliver
and all the rest - so many without memento
beneath the tumuli on the high hills
and under the harvest places.

(57)

Roland's implied grief and the quiet nature images merge to become a valediction to Jones's comrades, who would have become part of "the many without memento."

(56) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.160

(57) op.cit. p.163

When Ball is wounded and is too weak to drag himself and his cumbersome rifle to a first-aid post, he is deeply worried about abandoning the rifle. Such an action would be against all his training, and by linking Ball's concern with Roland's concern over the abandonment of his sword, Durandel, Jones reminds us that a very old tradition forbids the warrior to allow his weapon to get into the hands of the enemy. The parallel in their situations brings nobility to Ball, which inclines us to regard him, lying under an oak tree waiting for the stretcher-bearers or for death, as one of the 'secret princes' and not as a pathetic victim. The allusion to the Roland epic ennobles also the German and the English dead lying in the wood. Roland lay next to a sardonyx stone and died, and his heroic qualities and beauty of feature seem to pass to the still forms of the dead soldiers:

... their seemly faces as carved in a sardonyx stone; as undiadem'd princes turn their gracious profiles in a hidden seal, so did these appear, under the changing light.

(58)

Such lines bear out Atholl Murray's statement: "The primary impulse behind In Parenthesis is a desire to honour the memory of the men who fought in the First World War and to represent faithfully the spirit of their actions." (59)

The discussion of the legends and epics that form the basis of the tradition that underlies, and indeed is part of the action of, In Parenthesis, has made clear how skilfully David Jones uses allusion. It has been seen, for instance, in his lament for Aneirin Lewis, that through his references to the Mabinogi, Culwch and Olwen, Jones

(58) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.184

(59) Atholl Murray : 'In Perspective: A Study of David Jones's In Parenthesis in *Critical Quarterly* 16 (1974) p.254

The cool exactness with which the paroxysms of his body are recorded prevents any horror or sentiment, yet the merging of the realistic detail into the imagery of the run-down clock and of blindness gives those images great strength. The final line of the passage has a lyrical and poignant intensity that is extraordinarily moving. It has that ineffable quality of some of Owen's poetry:

And in his eyes
The cold stars lighting very old and bleak
In different skies.

(61)

In Part Seven, as well as portraying the fate of individual soldiers, Jones has symbolized, by the figure of a shameless whore, the mad wildness of death and its huge powers of devastation. Similar hideous depictions of death are common in Celtic and other European mythologies, but it is likely that Jones was influenced by the prayer of St. Francis:

Be praised, my lord, for our Sister Bodily Death
From whom no living man can escape.

(62)

Jones's depiction is powerfully apt:

But sweet sister death has gone debauched today and stalks
on this high ground with strumpet confidence, makes no coy
veiling of her appetite but leers from you to me with all
her parts discovered.

(63)

No image could transmit so well the strident noise of modern warfare,

(60) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.166

(61) Wilfred Owen : Wilfred Owen: War Poems and Others ed. Dominic Hibberd (London 1973) p.84

(62) The Daily Office : The Canticle of Brother Son
(a Prayer of St Francis)

(63) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.162

the inescapable nature of death, and the fear and innocence of the victims of war. Isaac Rosenberg's similar portrayal of death as a Valkyrie hungering for her soldier lover suffers in comparison, because it is too romantic, missing the screaming vulgarity of death in war. Rosenberg felt, as Jones did, that death was an insatiable force, but he muted its ugly aspect in his effort to portray its victims as honoured warriors. Jones felt the same impulse to honour as Rosenberg, but he avoids the confusion of 'Daughters of War' by creating a counterpart to Sweet Sister Death in the Queen of the Woods. She is as gentle and restorative as Death is savage and destructive. She brings a promise of new life in the gifts of spring and summer flowers and berries that she bestows on the twelve most deserving dead - six of whom are Germans and six from the Royal Welch:

She speaks to them according to precedence. She knows
what's due to this elect society. She can choose twelve
gentle-men. She knows who is most lord between the high
trees and on the open down.

Some she gives white berries
 some she gives brown
Emil has a curious crown it's
 made of golden saxifrage.

...
Dai Great-coat, she can't find him anywhere - she calls
both high and low, she had a very special one for him.

...
She carries to Aneirin-in-the-nullah a rowan sprig, for
the glory of Guenedota. You couldn't hear what she said to
him, because she was careful for the Disciplines of the
Wars.

(64)

There is much tender humour in this passage that is spiritually soothing after the terrible rampage of Death. The image of the Queen so busily and so conscientiously rewarding each of her twelve heroes brings a smile, and so does the gentle dig at Aneirin Lewis. Lewis, like his ancestor Captain Fluellen at Agincourt, dearly loved the

proper conduct and discipline of the wars.

This passage is the final tribute to the Royal Welch, and it is an appropriate one, for it conveys most clearly the gentleness and goodness of David Jones that informs the whole of In Parenthesis. In a work that is dedicated to the honour of all the men of the First World War it is aesthetically pleasing that the best of them, the "Secret Princes", should be appropriately crowned. It is right that this, the only fantasy in a work in which great care has been taken to ground everything in reality, should have a realistic basis. The summer growth in Mametz Wood would soon have covered the bodies of the dead.

There is in fact much quiet humour in In Parenthesis, and one of the best examples is Jones's description of Ball's platoon's meeting with a most unlikely storeman in the trenches. In the description of the death of Jenkins the chivalric terms lent grace, but here "accoutrements", "gorgeted", and "greaved" provide a burlesque effect, so far are this place and this creature "gorgeted in woollen Balaclava" from the original context of the words. As in the passage on Jenkins, one notices how well Jones uses movement to convey the nature of the person. Here the storeman's popping his head in and out of his hole, his drawing of the sacking curtain smartly across the entrance to his lair, and the blending of his clothes, hair, and whiskers into his surroundings suggest that he has transformed himself into a strange, muddy animal, adapted to life in the trenches by sharpness and camouflage:

A man, seemingly native to the place, a little thick man, swathed with sacking, a limp, saturated bandolier thrown over one shoulder and with no other accoutrements, gorgeted in woollen Balaclava, groped out from between two tottering corrugated uprights, his great moustaches beaded with condensation under his nose. Thickly greaved with mud so that his boots and puttees and sandbag tie-ons were become

one whole of trickling ochre. ... He slipped back quickly, with a certain animal caution, into his hole; to almost immediately poke out his wool-work head, to ask if anyone had the time of day or could spare him some dark shag or a picture-paper. Further, should they meet a white dog in the trench her name was Belle, and he would like to catch any bastard giving this Belle the boot.

John Ball told him the time of day.

No one had any dark shag.

No one had a picture paper.

They would certainly be kind to the bitch, Belle. They'd give her half their iron rations - Jesus - they'd let her bite their backsides without a murmur.

He draws-to the sacking curtain over his lair.

(65)

Jones has a highly-developed ability to use the organization of the line to enhance the effect of the words. In the latter part of the passage he uses the short lines with the long pause in between to convey how stunned the troops were at the storeman's questions, and the return to paragraph form enhances their eager chorus of assurance that they would be kind. The final line reveals that Jones had a comedian's sense of timing, in the abrupt drawing-to of the sacking curtain's summarily cutting off the troops voices and stares. One notices this capacity again when Private Saunders tries to avoid work by "the expedient of busying himself with his left puttee, conveniently come down." One thinks, as there is one shovel short, that Saunders will get away with it, especially as Corporal Quilter seems not to notice, but "Corporal Quilter spits from time to time on the duckboard. He hands to Private Saunders a dredging ladle and the heavier pick."

(66)

Sometimes, humour is the alleviating force that reduces fear to a tolerable level. On their first journey up the trenches, the troops are bewildered by the engulfing mud, the darkness, the high-

(65) David Jones : In Parenthesis pp.89-90

(66) op.cit. p.91

explosives, and with how easily one can get lost. It is their remarks about Lieutenant Jenkins's powers of leadership that stop the fear:

... and is our Piers Dorian Isambard Jenkins - adequately informed - and how should his inexperience not be a broken reed for us - and fetch up in Jerry's bosom.

...
and do we trapse dementedly round phantom mulberry bush ...
can the young bastard know his bearings.

(67)

Jones's facility for capturing movement and making it significant extends to his rendering of ordinary speech. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the doling out of rations on the first morning in the trenches. He has caught, through a perfect ear for rhythm and intonation, the sound of Lance Corporal Lewis's clipped, authoritative voice, very different from the lyrical voice of his Welsh musings, as he makes just division of the curious mixture of food, stationery, and tobacco. These two paragraphs, which vividly convey the sight, smell, and taste of the food, illustrate how concrete is the basis of this writing:

Loose tea mingled with white sugar, tied in heel of sandbag, pudding fashion, congealed, clinging to the hemp mesh, and one tin of butter.

They bring for them,
for each and for several;
he makes division, he ordains:
three ration biscuits,
one-third part of a loaf,
two Field Service postcards
one Field Service envelope
one piece of cheese of uncertain dimension, clammy, pitted
with earth and very hairy, imprinted with the sodden
hessian's weft and warp; powerfully unappetising;
one tin of *Tickler's* plum and apple for three,
two packets of *Trumpeter* for cigarette smokers,
one tin of issue tobacco for pipe smokers.

(68)

(67) David Jones : In Parenthesis p.34

(68) *op.cit.* p.72

disintegrating world is another way in which they are heroic. Malory's West Land and the land laid Waste by Twrch Trywth are the two recurring symbols in the zone of the trenches, and they express its blasted landscape desolated by war. When they enter the world of the trenches, the soldiers step into "the stumbling dark of the blind ... this all depriving darkness split now by crazy flashing; marking hugely clear the spilled bowels of trees, splinter-spike, leper-ashen, sprawling the receding, unknowable, wall of night ...". What prevents this world from being wholly terrifying is the concern of Mr. Jenkins, who watches them "like western-hill shepherd"; the care of the man in front who helps haul the one who tripped to his feet - "Sorry mate - you all right china? - lift us yer rifle - an' don't take on so Honey ..."; and their humour. Their doubts about Jenkins's fitness to guide them have been noted, and one laughs too at their disrespectful opinion of a staff officer whom they pass, and who officiously waves his torch about: "The bastard'll have us all blown up ... it's that cissy from Brigade, the one wat powders." There is heroism, too, in their refusal to be sucked into the chaos that surrounds them - in their urge to "make order for however brief a time in whatever wilderness." Within minutes of their arriving at a barn on their march to the Front Line, "the more contriving" had sought out nails and hooks on which to hang their gear, and had brought a homeliness to the bleak and dirty place. In the trenches they face a greater challenge: "all their world is shelving, coagulate, substantial matter guttered and dissolved, sprawled to glaucous insecurity," but somehow man's home-making instinct prevails, and in pockets down the trenches there is the faint "homing perfume of wood burned", and the new soldiers, stumbling along in the blackness, realize that there is "a folk life here, a culture already developed, already venerable and rooted."

The soldiers' wholly admirable, creaturely ability to make an order and a harmony in the midst of the brutality and devastation of trench warfare leads one back to the truth central to In Parenthesis, expressed at the end of the previous chapter, that David Jones perceives heroism in behaviour which, in Roman Catholic terms, constitutes a sacrament or a signum.

This chapter has revealed some of the principal ways in which Jones has, by his interweaving of heroic literature and heroic tradition with the situation of his comrades, made manifest to the reader their worthiness to be regarded as heroes. What remains is to emphasize the impulse from which this need to celebrate their heroism proceeds: this will be done by revealing more specifically how In Parenthesis is, in itself, a glorious signum, a record of smaller signa.

The opening paragraphs give an indication of the shape that In Parenthesis is to take, and of the process, which goes on throughout the book, of the religious moment breaking into the whole of man's life, bringing an unexpected grace. In these paragraphs Jones describes the battalion's last parade before leaving for France: they are a mime of the sergeant and officers bringing the men to order, embodied in a passage which reflects accurately ordinary army ritual, but one realizes from the parallel Jones draws between the silence and the discipline of the troops and the silence and discipline of monks in a refectory that he is, in his mind, transmuting the commonplace nature of this occasion into something that is quite out of the ordinary:

'49 Wyatt, 01549 Wyatt

Coming Sergeant

Pick 'em up, pick 'em up - I'll stalk with your chamber

Private Leg sick
 Private Ball absent
 '01 Ball, '01 Ball, Ball of No 1 ...
 Where's Ball, 25201 Ball - you corporal
 Ball of your section
 Movement round and about the Commanding Officer
 Bugler will you sound 'Orderly Sergeants' ...
 Heavily jolting and sideway jostling, the noise of
 liquid shaken in a small vessel by a regular jogging
 movement, a certain clinking ending in a shuffling of the
 feet sidelong - all clear and distinct in that silence
 peculiar to parade grounds and to refectories. The silence
 of a high order full of the peril in the breaking of it,
 like the coming on parade of John Ball.

(70)

That Jones believes that there is a transmuting power which will make a parade, which seems wholly lacking in the pomp and splendour one traditionally associates with valedictory military parades, into a signum is reinforced by what he writes a few lines further on of temporary unpaid Lance-Corporal Aneirin Merddyn Lewis, whose remembrances of the warrior traditions of his Welsh ancestors and love of the discipline of the war bring in a manner, baptism and metaphysical order to the bankruptcy of the occasion.

In this instance, the metamorphosis of the parade into a signum is made in explicitly religious terms, but, as this chapter has revealed, the grace which Jones finds in human behaviour is not always grounded in liturgical or biblical reference. The exploration of his use of The Gododin, the Morte D'Arthur, The Mabinogion and other literary works, as well as his use of humour, has shown that he indicates the sanctity and heroism of his comrades' behaviour in a large number of other ways. The certainty, however, that he intends his celebration of this behaviour to be viewed in a wider religious context is revealed by the structure of the whole work, which, by no accident, reflects that of the Roman Catholic Mass.

Beginning with the grave ritual of the parade which prefigures the opening moments of the Mass, In Parenthesis progresses with a careful beauty and precision of structure through the time of preparation to the moment of immolation, which for the Royal Welch was being sent into attack on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. In the Mass, the emphasis is on the resurrection aspect of Christ's sacrifice, and thus it is that in most of Part VII, when Jones's own emphasis must be on the terror and pain which the men experience during and before they go into battle, he turns to the Bible and to the Offices of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, which make real the terror and pain which Christ suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane, at his trial, and on the Cross. Just as the magnificent, regenerating power of the Eucharist on Easter Saturday restores the balance of the Mass to the life of man, so the gentle goodness of the Queen of the Woods bestowing gifts on those dead who are worthy restores the balance of harmony to In Parenthesis, making it a profound and beautiful sacrament.

The opening lines to Part VII, the very sound of which suggests the men's fear and desperation, are from the 'Tenebrae for Good Friday' and thus suggest that these men share the desolation of the doomed Christ on that day. This apprehension of terror and doom is intensified by the 'Song of Degrees' which follows - a prayer full of the images of death and torment - by the frantic snatch of a prayer from the 'Office of the Dead' as the men prepare to go over the top, and by 'Responde Mihi', the prayer of contrition which embodies Job's anguished question: "Wilt thou consume me for the sins of my youth?" The enormity of what the troops bear, waiting in great fear but perfect obedience for the order to attack, is emphasized by the

progress of the image to that of the anguish of Christ waiting in the Garden of Gethsemane for his ordeal to begin:

you can't believe the Cup wont pass from
or they wont make a better show
in the Garden.

(71)

This explicit identification of the troops' anguished obedience with that of Christ is accomplished by Jones's embedding of the biblical allusions in the prosaic, inadequate language of the soldiers: "won't make a better show" and "won't pass from"; and thus, in a very real way, their discipline is transformed into something which is deeply religious and heroic.

When the terrible machine-guns mow down the exposed Royal Welch Fusiliers "walking in the morning on the flat roof of the world", their deaths are mourned in two allusions which recall the agony and the heroic beauty of the biblical laments:

Jonathan my lovely one
on Gelboe mountain
and the young man Absalom.

(72)

While it is in Part VII that one finds the greatest concentration of liturgical and biblical allusions, which are employed to make vivid the plight of the men and to stress their heroism, the whole text is interspersed with such allusions, revealing very clearly the religious context in which Jones meant the poem to be read. Perhaps the most striking instance is found in Part IV, when the soldiers are given their rum ration:

(71) In Parenthesis p.158

(72) op.cit. p.163

Come off it Moses - dole out the issue.
 Dispense salvation,
 strictly apportion it,
 let us taste and see,
 let us be renewed,
 for christ's sake let us be warm.
 O have a care - don't spill the precious
 O don't jog his hand - ministering;
 do take care.

(73)

The first image, of the corporal as Moses dispensing the heaven-sent bread and quail to the starving Israelites, gives way quite naturally, in the soldier's oath, to the Eucharist itself. This reference to that gift from God which saved the lives of the Israelites and to the rite which signifies the renewal of life seems to sanctify the need of the cold and tired troops for their rum ration, particularly as the blend of the speech of the troops with the language of the liturgy is done with complete harmony. Confirming the sincerity and solemnity of the ritual with the rum are the lines:

Each one in turn, and humbly, receives his meagre benefit.
 This lance-jack sustains them from his iron spoon: and this
 is thank-worthy.

(74)

Considering the crucial importance of the signum in Jones's thinking - illustrated so clearly by the above quotation - it is hardly surprising that his target for criticism, other than the staff officers, is the insensitive conduct of priests, who, of all men in the trenches, should have demonstrated sacramental behaviour.

The most poignant of this criticism occurs in Part VII during the battle, when Jones subtly indicates through an allusion to the parable of the Good Samaritan both the extremity of the suffering of the wounded troops and precisely what is required of a priest or

any other human person in such circumstances:

But O dear God and suffering Jesus
 Why dont they bring water from a well
 rooty and bully for a man on live
 and mollifying oil poured in
 and hands to bind with gentleness.

(75)

Like the priest and the Levite of Christ's story, the staff officers, munching chocolate while strolling through the wounded, are oblivious to the plight of the soldiers, and so is the the modern priest, Father Larkin, who concerns himself only with those who are past all help: "But why is Father Larkin talking to the dead?" This pungent question asked by Private Ball contains a deal of criticism of the ministry in the trenches. It is certainly intended as a comment on Father Larkin that, minutes after Ball wonders what the priest is doing, a fellow soldier dies screaming in Ball's arms, while he tries hopelessly to comfort him, and to stem the bleeding with a First Field Dressing.

Jones's criticism of the Catholic priests is not confined to Father Larkin. Father Vaughan, a fanatical patriot who urged "greater zeal in the destruction of enemy personnel", is lampooned in the soft, Welsh tones of Ball's friend, the Lewis gunner, who, after suggesting that "Mr. Bertrand-bloody-Russell" be garrotted with the 'Union Flag', says that Father Vaughan should be made O.C.Sergeant Instructors and detailed "to pr-reach a course of sermons on the Bull Ring to further foster the offensive spirit."

The Roman Catholic priests were not the only ones Jones found misguided and lacking: in one masterly passage he shows how inadequate the Church of England clergymen were in coping with the

spiritual needs of the troops at the Front:

The official service was held in the field; there they had spreaded a Union Jack on piled biscuit tins, behind the 8 in. siege, whose regular discharges made quite inaudible the careful artistry of the prayers he read.

He preached from the Matthew text, of how He cares for us above the sparrows. The medical officer undid, and did up again, the fastener of his left glove, behind his back, throughout the whole discourse. They sang *Onward Christian Soldiers* for the closing hymn.

(76)

Many writers have commented critically on the way the churches failed to fulfil their role on the battlefield, but none with the economy and power that Jones displays in this passage of humorous description. The clergyman, one notices, makes no effort at all to adapt to the new situation. He does not even insist that his service be held in a place where it can be heard, but instead carries on as though he were at home, oblivious of the fact, or uncaring, that his audience is unable to appreciate "the careful artistry of his prayers." This phrase alone exposes the hollowness of his faith. His text, too, on the fall of the sparrows, must have made the members of the congregation who could hear wonder at its extreme incongruity. The negative nature of the experience is caught in the detail of the medical officer undoing and doing up again the fastener of his glove.

The examination of the theological basis of Jones's understanding of heroism completes this study of In Parenthesis. "I did not intend this as a War book - it happens to be concerned with war", Jones writes in the preface, and now one realizes that he would have found heroism and did find it in any struggle of man to align his will with God's, in whatever context. It has been shown that this particular understanding emanated from his Dominican background, but

it is one held by non-Catholic Christians as well. Indeed, a testament which I believe most aptly and most movingly conveys the nature of the heroic effort which Jones himself manifests and celebrates is made by an Anglican:

Theological truth is the truth of God's relationship with man and it is the fruit not of learning but of experience. In this sense all theology, properly so called, is written in blood. It is an attempt to communicate what has been discovered at great cost in the deepest places of the heart - by sorrow and joy, frustration and fulfilment, defeat and victory, agony and ecstasy, tragedy and triumph. Theology, properly so called, is the record of a man's wrestling with God. Wounded in some way or other by the struggle the man will certainly be, but in the end he will obtain the blessing promised to those who endure. The theologian in this respect is no different from the poet or dramatist. All of them must write in blood.

(77)

(77) Harry Williams : Foreword to W H Vanstone's Love's Endeavour,
Love's Expense (Darton, Longman and Todd,
 London 1977) p.xi

CHAPTER 6

David Jones : 'The Passchendaele Fragment
from the Unfinished Book of Balaam's Ass'

In one significant way, the statement of Harry Williams used to conclude the previous chapter should be used more properly to open the present chapter on David Jones's Passchendaele Fragment, because, even more than In Parenthesis, it is a record of a profound and bloody struggle by the artist to come to terms with material which was inimical to a poetic vision which was essentially creaturely and kind. That Jones believed, initially, that he could come to terms with the material and in much the same way as he had done in In Parenthesis is revealed in a letter which he wrote to Tom Ede in 1939: "... if you start off saying in a kind of way how bloody everything is you end up in a kind of *praise - inevitably* - I mean a sort of Balaam business."⁽¹⁾ He believed, therefore, that he could - in the phraseology used in the previous chapter of the present work - still make a signum of his later writing of the war.

At the same time, however, he was completely aware of the difficulty of carrying out what he was resolved upon:

I've got a miserable feeling that my new thing is not so 'tight' and 'made' as I.P. ... I think it's because it is not so determined by factual happenings in which I was physically concerned, as I.P. was. This bloody difficulty of writing about 'ideas' and somehow making them concrete is a bugger to surmount - but I believe it can be done.

(2)

(1) David Jones : Dai Greatcoat p.91

(2) op.cit. p.89 (Letter to Harman Grisewood, January 1939)

The unhappiness with the structure of the whole work, which has as its centre the disastrous assault on Pilckem Ridge(*) made by the Royal Welch Fusiliers in early August 1917, indicates a good deal of Jones's general lack of ease with the age of modern technological warfare which he believed had begun with the Battle of the Somme:

Those of my unit who had been in the contest of the woods of the Somme in July 1916 felt the great change that mechanization in one form or another had unconsciously changed things quite a bit.(sic) Some, by a chance give-away word, betrayed their feelings, their 'instress' that they would, if they could, bring back that sylvan terrain where so many Agamemnons had cried aloud.

(3)

The diction of this passage from a letter written in 1974 - 'contest of the woods' and 'sylvan terrain where so many Agamemnons had cried aloud' - suggests a notion of chivalrous, gallant warfare which would certainly seem to be unable to accommodate the mud and slaughter of the last months of the Battle of the Somme and of Passchendaele. It is, therefore, understandable that Jones did struggle continuously for five years to write this poem, and that he was eventually to abandon it altogether. Nevertheless, despite the typically self-deprecatory remarks about "the new thing" not being "so 'tight' and 'made' as I.P.", the Passchendaele Fragment itself forms a unity, having the fluid radial structure of the old Welsh lament: indeed, in the elaborate introduction, in the excursions into past disastrous attempts to take the mill on Pilckem Ridge, in the digressive style of the religious section, the flashbacks and interweaving of past and present feats of

(*) The assault on Pilckem Ridge was one of the engagements of the Battle of Passchendaele (May - November) in which almost an entire battalion of the Royal Welch were killed. David Jones was detailed to a reserve group, so missed this particular engagement. He had volunteered to take the place of a married man, but had been "rated by the Adjutant for pretending to wish to be a bloody hero." See Dai Greatcoat p.252

(3) Dai Greatcoat op.cit. p.253

individual soldiers, and in the discussion of the reasons why certain individuals survived, the Fragment is more truly reminiscent of The Gododin than is In Parenthesis. Much of the artistry of the piece comes, just as it did in the laments, from the skillful way in which apparently disparate parts are joined together to form a unified whole.

The significance of the second issue which David Jones raised in his letter to Harman Grisewood - on the difficulty of working with 'ideas' - becomes apparent when one reads the Passchendaele Fragment, for one realizes that Jones is using the destruction of the Royal Welch battalion in their attack on Pilckem Ridge as a metaphor for the demise of the whole English culture. Thus it is that the characters of this fragment, consequent on their having names such as Tommy Tucker, Langland, Rhymer, and Lucifer, can have none of the reality and individuality of the characters of In Parenthesis. They are mere symbols of a predominantly rural culture, and thus are subordinate to the 'idea'. One senses that it is principally with this view of human beings as symbols as well as victims that Jones has difficulty because, as has been seen, throughout his life the need to celebrate human behaviour was integral to both his belief and his art. This notion is supported by René Hague's opinion of his friend's overall view of war, which, despite its realism, appears to have had erased from it any consciousness of the abhorrence of war:

... confirmation comes from David's conversation and letters." In neither was there ever any attempt to avoid any aspect of his wartime experiences. There were no nightmares, no horrors that could not be mentioned, no noises, smells, scenes that made wounds bleed afresh. There was only pleasure in the searchlight of memory, the recapture of half-forgotten detail, the link with tradition, the re-creation of personality, the analogy with problems of ordinary social and domestic life - and above all, humour.

Given, then, the strongly sanguine and heroic basis of Jones's vision of war, it is to be expected that much of the power of this fragment comes from the tension which is set up between the treatment of subject matter and the use of poetic devices which in In Parenthesis augmented the celebration of the heroic, and their use in this fragment to express a profoundly unheroic vision of war. Jones, in his introductory remarks to it in The Sleeping Lord collection, writes of its value being in its "seeming to afford a link of sorts between the two widely separated books: In Parenthesis and The Anathemata." (5) This is true, in that the fragment reveals a definite movement towards the freer, more far-ranging style of The Anathemata, but it is as important to recognize that its effect can only be fully realized if it is read as a companion piece to In Parenthesis, to which it is the antithesis.

A line from The Gododin which cannot fail to haunt the mind is the cry of the bard to his audience: "Gododin I demand thy support." That his audience is with the poet is an assumption common to all heroic poetry, and one shared by Jones when he wrote In Parenthesis, for it is clear that he then expected his audience to be as moved as he was by the heroic behaviour of his comrades and by their destruction. By 1939, however, Jones found that he could make no such assumption of the unity of the artist and his audience. He felt, instead, a growing alienation and so it is that, in place of the intimacy of In Parenthesis, which at once projected the reader into

(4) Dai Greatcoat p.58

(5) David Jones : The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments
(Faber and Faber, London 1975) p.97

the midst of the 55th Royal Welch Battalion's farewell parade, he opens the Passchendaele Fragment with a view of a bored, middle-class group "sitting in a well ventilated room" stifling yawns while smiling politely at someone who is about to recount the experience of the Royal Welch at Pilckem Ridge in August 1917. Their boredom with tales of the war is compared with the narrator's memories of his boredom with an old soldier's account of the Zulu Wars, told in the middle of a box barrage: "Poor boring old Spud, the tedious old sweat." Then, with an ease which shows a growing confidence in his individual way of working, David Jones shifts the scene back a thousand years with a single comparison: "... like Emeritus Nodens of the 2nd Adjutrix who regaled them with tales of the elusive Pict...". The skillful manner in which Jones implies and makes vivid a crucial difference between the audience of a lament of a contemporary war and the audiences of heroic societies, who would have been as one with the bard in his praise and anguish for doomed warriors, gives an indication of how he intended to use the tradition of the lament to demonstrate the profoundly unheroic nature of modern warfare, which precludes any view of the soldier as a hero. That this is indeed Jones's intention is at once made clear by the close of the introductory section, which is an evocation of the proud warrior forebears of Colour-Sergeant Michael Mary Gabriel Olav Aumerle D.C.M., M.M., who ranged the northern seas "in with the surf-break from Nord Meer o'er the faem via mareel'd Zetland & the Orcades, by Out Isles of Abendsee...".

The wildness of the sea and the image of Aumerle's fierce Nordic ancestors riding the waves in their high-prowed ships is taken up by the first voice and twisted into an image of horror in the opening paragraph of the first part;

Not a rock to cleft for, not a spare drift of soil for the
 living pounds of all their poor bodies drowned in the dun
 sea. (6)

The contrast between the proud riding of the sea by the Norsemen and the pathetic heaping up of writhing, khaki-clad bodies brings out the powerlessness of these modern soldiers to control their fate. They are merely victims, and the way in which modern warfare strips them of the last vestige of manliness is effected by the reduction of them to "living pounds".

An almost experiential impression of the bodies heaping up is brought about by the rhetorical device of attaching to the opening sentence a large number of prepositional phrases, each introduced by 'for'. "Not a rock to cleft for, not a spare drift of soil" is thus silently intoned in the reader's mind again and again as each group of Fusiliers is mentioned. The effect of the implied repetition of "not a rock to cleft for" is amplified by the repetition of another line which is as sombre and as terrible in its implication: "There was no help for them on that open plain." This echoes, then carries on to the end of the poem the theme of the opening line of the first part, so that there is a recurring reminder of the hopelessness of the Welch Fusiliers' position and of the reason for their undoing. The agents of their destruction, the efficient German artillery unit who make perfect use of their fortified windmill and of the exposed targets, are described individually in passages which appear amongst the descriptions of the British troops. This placing dramatically reminds the reader of the consequences of having "no rock to cleft for", and of how easily many are slaughtered by a very few men equipped with modern weapons.

The second part introduces a variation on the theme of the troops' defencelessness, for it opens with a recollection of the many ways in which men seek protection from harm - ranging from the young child's running to the mothering skirt to the desperate crying to God, who has from time immemorial shielded man from hurt. Despite this being a recalling of the comforting things which make life endurable, in this passage they are cruel reminders of the comfort which is denied the troops, and the images are presented in such a tumbling way that they become a reflection of the soldiers' frantic and terrified thoughts as they see that there is no escape from the German guns:

And what of His sure mercies that He swore in the ancient
days - where is His tempering for our bare back and sides
- where is provided the escape on that open plain?
(7)

The play on the words of the proverb 'God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb' in the second of the questions, despite being a humorous reference to the men's severe army haircuts, increases the impression of their defencelessness. Their poor shorn heads are as vulnerable and as exposed as is the body of the shorn lamb to the elements, but for them there is no merciful, tempering God. The feeling that they are vulnerable and innocent, engendered by the metaphor of the shorn lamb, is extended by their simple rural names, and their bewildered, lost-animal behaviour when under the murderous fire of the enemy. It seems doubly pitiful that these rural innocents should be the victims of technological warfare. This comes to them in the form of Big Willie, fed by the highly competent Hieronymous Högemann and Rembalt the Galician, and also the gun operated by the German *kundig* gunner, Hans Iselin.

(7) The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments p.105

Even though the gun is the modern instrument of their death, partly because its operation requires skill and prowess and partly because it was the conventional weapon of the time, it conveys no horror. The symbol of the alien and sterile ugliness peculiar to technological war is rather the iron foliage. It is suggested that it is the terrible transfiguration of the natural landscape which kills them and has killed the men of the Irish and Scottish companies whose remains are still on the barbed wire after earlier diversions before the mill.

That the Welsh, a year later in the war, were sharing exactly the same fate as the Irish and the Scottish for exactly the same reason - to create 'a diversion before the Mill' - is repeated four times. The purpose of this repetition is to emphasize the appalling stupidity and obstinacy of the Staff, who had issued their express commands on four previous and equally disastrous occasions.

The powerful, harsh imagery of the transfigured earth, the bitterness inherent in the insistence on the G.O.C.in C.'s futile and and expenditure of human life, and the pathos of the rural victims make this section the climax of the lament. The tragedy of it is contained in the repetition of the stark liturgical line: "But there was no help for them on that open plain." By this stage it has a deeper significance than it did earlier, for the reader now knows fully why their position is so hopeless - the Staff, the German artillery, and the landscape are arrayed against them - and their doom has been prefigured by three other disastrous attempts on the mill.

In the traditional lament the tragic grandeur of the climactic moment is never undermined, but in this work Jones does so

deliberately, by a neat change of tone from tragic to comic by the mention of the names of the survivors:

And three men only returned from this diversion, and they were called:

Private Lucifer
Private Shenkin
Private Austin

(8)

The comic relief which this group, consisting of a devil and two cowards, provides will be enlarged upon in the discussion of the use of character; but in breaking the tension at this point Jones is forcibly demonstrating that in the wholesale mechanized slaughter of Passchendaele there could be no relief found in the old laments of the insistence at the moment of crisis, on the maintenance of traditional values such as that at Maldon:

Will shall be harder, heart the bolder,
Courage the more, as our might lessens.

(9)

Just as skillfully as Jones changes tone between the second and the third part of the lament, so he shifts back to a solemn tone in the fourth part by the use of elevated language reminiscent of Malory in the last part of the transitional sentence:

And once the studded heel of Squib Lucifer darkened his [Shenkin's] snuggery, and he heard, above the noise of the weapons, familiar laughter on the plain.

(10)

The fourth part is the denouement to the catastrophe before the mill, and it is in the form of three prayers which ostensibly reflect the

(8) The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments p.105

(9) Dorothy Whitelock ed.: The Battle of Maldon
See p.19 above for Anglo-Saxon version.

(10) The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments pp.106-7

cries of the dying men. Jones's purpose seems at times to reveal the vast transmuting powers of the Holy Spirit and thus to make a signum of his vision of futile destruction, but, in the end, one realizes that the dominant image is purely that of the immolation of Christ. There seems to be no conviction of any transcendence, neither for the Royal Welch Fusiliers nor for the doomed civilization which these poor victims represent.

The first of their prayers sustains the homely note brought into the poem by the ordinariness of the names of the people they call to in their distress - names such as Aunt Birch, Ned, Margaret, and Brigit the Kildare maid. This is because, although they change their appeal from cries to the people they love to a cry to the Holy Spirit to use His transsubstantiating force, their prayer retains a very human and innocent quality. They ask that the man-made holocaust in which they are dying be transformed into a glorious plan for their passing from this world. The simplicity and the ingenuous impossibility of their request is accentuated by their childlike images of God and Heaven. They pray to the God with the balm under his great wings, and to the God whose angel measured the new city of Jerusalem with a reed. The rush of 'who' clauses when they enumerate the powers of the Holy Spirit also adds to the ingenuous effect, and increases the pathos of their hope that, just as Balaam's curse of the Israelites was transmuted to a blessing, so will be transmuted Sergeant Bullock's command that they advance to the mill.

The second prayer is an invocation to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the Virgin Mary, to God the Father, and to some of the Apostles. It too is filled with pathos because in their invocations the soldiers expose their weaknesses as well as their fearful aspiration

for an afterlife. Mary, in her role of the loving and suffering mother of Christ the warrior, is called upon because she embodies the love and concern that they themselves need so greatly in their abandonment and death. She is especially relevant to them because in allowing her son to embark on his great campaign she helped to provide them with a champion to battle for them against the Devil in Hell. The soldiers call to Christ's disciples James, Peter, and John because they slept at their posts in the Garden of Gethsemane: to the poor dying sinners this sin of sloth among saints must have been a great comfort. Their invocation to Enoch is childlike and touching, too, because they want to be borne rapidly away from their hellish situation to Heaven just as he was. This effect is increased by the simple language and cosy tone which, in the last clause, is reminiscent of children's scripture stories: "who takes you alive to be his perpetual friend." In the last sentence the same wish is expressed in the invocation to the God of Abraham, but the recalling of God's help to the Israelites leads on, in the style of the lament, to a consideration of the prophet Melchisedec (*). Melchisedec blessed Abraham after his return from battle against Chedorlaomer, and served him bread and wine. According to Roman Catholicism, the prophet-king Melchisedec is the great transitional figure between the Old and the New Testament due to his foretoking the oblation of Christ. It is appropriate, therefore, that he should introduce the third and most solemn of the prayers, the contemplation of Christ's sacrifice.

The third prayer begins with a formal recitation of the Welsh and Latin titles of Melchisedec which recalls the address of the heroes of The Gododin, and thus prepares the reader for the fact that

(*) The normal spelling of this name is Melchizedek, but Jones's usage is followed here

the emphasis of this prayer is on the time and the timelessness of the event which David Jones considers to be the most significant in the history of man. Melchisedec carries within himself a sense of that timelessness, as he was believed to be of divine origin, and therefore from no finite period in human history: also, his giving of the bread and wine to Abraham was both a foreshadowing and the beginning of the divine plan of human fulfilment and salvation. The indivisible link between his action and that of Christ and the significance of both of these actions is made clear by David Jones by the placing of them in one flowing sentence:

MELCHISEDÉC Wledig, he who
two millennia before the Abendmahl
foretokened that Oblation made on dies Iovis
noswyl duw Gwener
the day he was to suffer
pridie the Ides of Mars

(11)

It is significant, however, that Melchisedec's action ends in an image of the suffering, not the risen Christ. Any connection therefore that Jones would appear to be making between the soldiers' sacrifice and Christ's does not, in this instance, foretoken a glorious resurrection. This reading is supported by the return from the religious digression to the dying soldiers, whose ultimate fate, unlike that of the soldiers who died in Mametz Wood(*), is not necessarily one of Christian peace and deliverance:

On all the devices of the peoples, on all anointed stones,
on fertile goddesses, that covering arbours might spring up
on that open plain for poor maimed men to make their
couches there. ...

Each calling according to what breasts had fed them - for
rite follows matriarchate when y'r brain-pan's stove in.

(12)

(*) See In Parenthesis

(11) The Sleeping Lord pp.108-9

(12) op.cit. p.110

The effect of this passage is heightened by the only personal image in this part - the image of a mortally wounded Welsh soldier, Dai Meyrick, whose cry to the remote Celtic gods of his ancestors seems to reach back to the beginning of history and echo the cry of all dying Celts. This impression is strengthened by the use of the term 'anaphora' to describe the regular repetition of his cry, and by the formal Celtic phrasing: "beyond the Wall with the Men of the North". The wild, sad quality of his cry is caught also in the comparison of it to the cry of a wounded hare, and in the reference to Dai's mother, whose real allegiance is to her Celtic land and its men. The change in ~~tone from~~ the melancholy wildness of Dai's lament to the cynical, humorous tone which Jones adopts for the three survivors is brought about by the parenthetical aside qualifying what has been said concerning Dai's mother. The description of her sitting "under her husband in his Moravian bethel" has sexual undertones which deflate the romantic images of the earlier part of the sentence. The deflatory effect is added to by the clumsiness of the Welsh name Drws-y-Coed-Uchaf in Arfon.

The nastiness and unworthiness of the survivors, Lucifer, Shenkin, and Austin the Dodger are increased by the proximity of ***** to the cries of the dying. To Shenkin, the dolorous anaphora of Dai and the other mortally wounded members of the platoon is merely a very irritating noise which drives him to an unusual athletic performance. This, too, is bitterly humorous, as normally he was clumsy and stumbling, but the frantic desire to save his skin gave him the agility of a "Rocky Mountain goat". Similarly, in contrast to the pure selfless love of Mary, Mrs Austin's "suffrages" to save her son, even if it means the loss of all the other men in the platoon, appear outrageous. Indeed, her intercession with the Almighty or Army H Q

(one is not sure which) is an appalling travesty of the Canon of the Mass. Mrs Austin conditioned and made acceptable in some roundabout way the tomfoolery of the G.O.C. in C. (13)

If Jones's real subject had been the destruction of the 55th Royal Welch battalion at Pilckem Ridge, this cynicism would seem incomprehensible. However, as he is demonstrating what survives after a culture is destroyed, the passage on Pick-em-up Shenkin, Austin the Dodger (as he came to be known), and Lucifer becomes a bitter and recognizably accurate comment on contemporary civilization. Viewed against such a background the full significance and tragedy of the final line of the lament strikes home - a line which, proper to the structure of the traditional lament, is a refrain the meaning of which, as the reader has seen, deepens as the poem progresses.

But for all the rest there was no help on that open plain.

It is in the treatment of character that Jones most clearly demonstrates a departure from the heroic tradition and the complementary ironic use he makes of this tradition. As was mentioned earlier (*), he employs the different characteristics of members of the platoon to reveal the variety and richness of a predominantly rural culture which he believed was irreparably "broken" by the technological warfare of the later stages of the First World War. Despite René Hague's comment (**) on his friend's tendency to glorify a Wales which had ended with Llewelyn the Last, Jones is realistic enough to recognize, as well as its virtues, the evil and crudity of the disintegrating culture. Thus it is that he makes as clear as the goodness the sinfulness of the men of his platoon; but so vivid at

(13) The Sleeping Lord p.111

(*) See p.198 above

(**) See p.139 above

moments is their innocence that he feels an almost unbearable sadness in their destruction. However, since their character must be subordinate to the theme of disintegration, they, unlike Private Ball, Aneirin Lewis, Mr Jenkins, and Dai Greatcoat, who exist independently of the epic framework, cannot be shown to be heroic. From the beginning to the end they are mere victims, trapped and without hope, sharing the fate of their lieutenant:

All the fine fiery waters in Headquarter's larder won't raise a mole-hill for Lieutenant Fairy on that open plain, where he's detailed, in the inscrutable counsels, to make a soldier's fall.

(14)

The reference here to the lieutenant's drinking and the suggestion, through his name, that he is a homosexual is striking, so very different is it from the first glimpse of his counterpart in In Parenthesis, the kindly and gracious Lieutenant Piers Isambard Dorian Jenkins, whose profile reminds one of the young squire's in the painting 'The Rout of San Romano'. This awareness of there being a profound discrepancy between the characterization of In Parenthesis and that of Balaam's Ass gradually becomes clear as the rest of the platoon emerges, for what is stressed is their sinfulness and their grotesqueness. There are the fiercely quarrelsome Balin and Balan (with the names of the faithful and loving brothers in the Morte D'Arthur), who tore No.3 platoon into factions often and again; the thieves Glyn, Gisbourne, and Goodfellow, who stole both a goose and a stable door from a French peasant woman; the greedy Bullcalf, who cheated miserably to get double rations; the lustful Nicholay with the branded arse, who lay for three days and nights with a woman whom he had lured from his sergeant; and the unattractive Harry Gill, with goosey skin, who shivered over his steaming skilly in a mid-August

trench, despite wearing "under his service jacket, his issue cardigan and another he'd stolen and two waistcoats above his issue shirt, and under it a woven vest of lamb's wool and next to his goosey skin a body belt twice tied" !

Mixed in among the liars, cheats, fornicators, and thieves are those who are treated with admiration and tenderness. The three chairmaker's mates, Loddington, Weedon, and Grimsdall, are unlike their fellows because they retain something of the fierce warlike spirit of their warrior ancestor "Hycga, their tall father". Instead of being cowed in an earlier attack at Fleubaix, they mouthed the inarticulate war cries of their fearsome forefather, who had burned twelve Welshmen. When they marched they moved lightfoot, apparently undaunted by the war. The main objects of the poet's compassion are, however, the five men from rural areas of Wales and England, and the Irish and Scottish companies who died in earlier, but just as futile attacks on the mill. The deaths of the two Welsh soldiers, Dai Meyrick and Madoc Sey, and the three Englishmen, Langland, Rhymer, and Byrd, have great pathos because in their extremity they revert to their simple rural selves. Hopelessly trapped in the withering German fire, they become like poor, bewildered animals, searching for the hills and green lanes which have been the comfort of their people for generations. The impression of their defencelessness is increased by the description of the German gunner watching them and grinning at the easy target they afford, and by the way in which the landscape is presented. When Jones mentions the human remains of other, earlier attacks, the land is presented as a cold malignant power ranged against the Irish and Scottish soldiers:

There was no help for them either on that open plain
because the virtue of the land was perished and there was
not grass but only broken earth and low foliage of iron;

and from the tangled spread of the iron hedge hung the garments peculiar to the men of Ireland and their accoutrements, and the limbs and carcasses of the Irish were stretched on some of the iron bushes ...

(15)

The stark, terrible phrase 'The virtue of the land was perished' sums up Jones's whole apprehension of the evil of technology. The land bereft of its natural foliage and given over wholly to the deseryt of war was, as Isaac Rosenberg had seen it and as Keith Douglas was to see it in the Second World War, a vast force implacably hostile to the men who had destroyed its gentle virtue. The comforting chalk of earlier days of the war has, by this stage, turned into a malign adjunct of the greater evil. Thus it is that the chivalric language which was used in In Parenthesis to reveal a sacrament of certain instances of behaviour is here used to indicate not a decorum in death of the poor rotting bodies but the pathos of what they represent. It is for this reason that Jones deliberately juxtaposes the harsh crudity of 'carcasses' with the chivalric cadence and language of 'garments peculiar to the men of Ireland'. One notes, also, that the emphasis on the nationality of the other regiments which were as futilely destroyed is to make evident that it was the whole British culture which was lost in that war.

Jones viewed what remains when a culture is swept away with a humour which reveals an understandable ambivalence of feeling. This emerges most obviously in the treatment of the survivors and the German gunners. The first of the survivors is Squib Lucifer, afterwards called Pussy Lucifer because he escaped the ninth death. The reason why he escapes despite the concentrated efforts of the crack German machine-gunner Hans Iselin is that "he is possessed of

agility, subtlety and lightness." He enjoys his invulnerability, and "laughs like anything", much to the discomfort and bewilderment of the Germans. The result of this is a charming and secret confidence between Iselin's Leutnant Bebbba and Hauptmann Altdorfer:

'How, sir, should we contend against *Geister*? That Tommy, sir, was no infantryman but an Anointed Cherub.' (sic)

'May be, Leutnant, may be, the enemy recruit widely.'
(16)

The second of the survivors, as we have seen, is the shambling Private Shenkin, Pick-em-up Shenkin. He is extraordinarily clumsy and forgetful, but the humour of him comes only partially from the slapstick behaviour which these qualities promote. The main reason why he amuses is his complete indifference to the proprieties of a normal soldier and the pressures which make him conform. He would keep a parade standing while he searched for certain articles of kit to which he was attached, oblivious of the rage of the sergeant and the restlessness of his mates. When he went into battle he ignored the instructions to wear battle dress, and was so hampered by his intricate equipment that he became jammed in the shell hole into which he fell. He neglected to struggle to free himself, as an ordinary soldier might, "partly because he had no effective interest in G.O.C.in C.'s diversion before the Mill, and partly because of his inability to deal with any complicated derangement of things ...".(17)

The acerbic humour of the reason why Private Austin survives has already been commented upon, but the consequent play on his name is used to brilliant effect, for its proximity to the last line lends a bitter twist to the stark grandeur of the ending:

(16) The Sleeping Lord p.106

(17) *ibid.*

And as before he was named by his section Ducky Austin, so afterwards he was called Austin the Dodger.

But for all the rest there was no help on that open plain.

(18)

It remains to examine with more specificity the supple and original use of language and metaphor in this poem.

These qualities are first vividly revealed when the complaints of the civilians trapped into hearing tales "of poor boring old Spud" and of the tedious old sweat Emeritus Nodens are stilled by the authority and solemnity of a new voice which opens the second part of the introduction:

But it is inevitable and meet:
while there is breath it is only right to bear immemorial
witness.

(19)

Much of the grandeur and firmness comes from echoes of the liturgy - "it is truly meet and just, right and salutary" - and they help to suggest a much more conscious bearing of immemorial witness than took place in In Parenthesis. There, despite the dedicatory preface, one felt that the writing of it was also a spontaneous expression of Jones's pride in his battalion and his need to share his experiences. In this writing, there is a broader social significance. Following the initial injunction are descriptions of the various ways in which war has been witnessed, which are introduced as an "unsheafing slow like beggar-shifts Kings' hands make fall from secret queens", and a "drawing back of veils". One of the ways war is witnessed recalls the 'making' of In Parenthesis in its transcendence of the harsh facts of war. It is a description of a dead soldier who is a "weedy, white, ex-clerk - dead as a nail, for sure", and his putrefying body is "left at

the sap-head and he standing upright between two", and then with one simple, ambiguous word this pathetic sight is transformed into an image of heraldic beauty. Due to what follows, the word 'upright', which at first suggests the pathos of the unburied corpse trapped grotesquely in a lifelike posture, suddenly suggests something very different. In context with the chivalric term 'armed at all points', 'upright' brings to mind the gallant bearing of the soldier standing erect and unflinching. This impression is enhanced by the heroic and Christlike images of the last part of the sentence: "and he himself, too, crowned with iron and bearing the weight of it ...". The allusion then is not to the suffering Christ bowed under the weight of the cross, but to the image that is always concurrent with it - the image of the warrior Christ, who, crowned with the thorns which symbolized the weight of man's sin, went forward with unswerving courage and dignity to his end. It is the image of Christ which appears in 'The Dream of the Rood', a poem which David Jones revered:

(20)

Yet, despite the power which the heroic tradition exerted over David Jones's imagination, and continued to exert, as the sheer poetry of his description of the ex-clerk testifies, he was completely aware that such treatment of Passchendaele and what it signified was not possible. Thus it is that the heroic image, the signum, is annihilated: "Gee! I do like a bloody lie turned gallantly romantical, fantastical, glossed by the old gang from the foundations of the world. ... No, Livinia, won't wash, and that you know well enough." (21)

(20) Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader revised by Dorothy Whitelock
(Oxford University Press, 1967) p.155

Then the young hero who was God Almighty got ready, resolute and strong in heart.

To emphasize the profound difference between his present subject and that of In Parenthesis he makes an interesting play on the use of Arthurian metaphor, the significance of which in the earlier work will be recalled. In place of the chivalry of Camelot, he finds his metaphor in Broceliande, the forest of Merlin. Like most of David Jones's allusions, it is an exact and deeply resonant one. Merlin, like the Welch Fusiliers, knew that he was doomed, but was powerless to prevent his end. Helpless in love, he followed the young and beautiful Nimiane into the forest, knowing that she would use the knowledge which he had given her to trap him forever in a hawthorn bush. The story has elements of pathos and tragedy in it, in the dignity with which Merlin submits to his doom, and in the sadness of his great gifts being encapsulated forever, and this mirrors the situation of the soldiers and what they signify: "The salient is Broceliande - these twain indeed are one."

The pathos of the platoon's brave and hopeless attack, and the corresponding strength and cunning of the German ambush are conveyed by the witty comparison of the contemporary fortified windmill with Don Quixote's windmills. All the elements in Cervantes's account augment the picture here - the looming malignity of the windmill, the futility and courage of the hero's attack and the pathetic obedience of his follower, not understanding the advance at all. The description of the modern German defences, which follows the image of the windmill, also strikes a chill due to the mass of detail and the impression of cool efficiency: "... trust him to leave no stone unturned." In the last sentence the feeling of fear mounts, with the emphasis on the features of the place which are to destroy the platoon: the terrible flatness of the ground; its barrenness, which

offers no cover; and, finally, the comparison with the slaughter of the trapped English troops at Bannockburn: " ... as trapped and decoyed as Bannockburn frontage for 300 yards below his glacis."

In 1973 David Jones, when describing to René Hague the devastated terrain of this offensive, recalled some planks across a stream leading off the Yser canal, and he wrote that what struck him forcefully about the crude bridge was that there were rustic handrails here and there: "because they were so humane when contrasted with their setting." (22) This nostalgic and highly developed sensitivity to all that is creaturely and kind is made evident in his use of language in which the imagery is predominantly rural and religious. Even his rogues and weaklings have names or are described in terms which recall the English countryside, and it is this which precludes any suggestion of satire. The greed of '14 Bullcalf and that of Clymn Clough, Gisbourne, and Goodfellow, for instance, is overridden by the pathos lent by the strong rural associations of their names. They seem to belong to a world which makes them unfitted for a landscape of fortified structures of reinforced concrete and "loopholes of the best pattern".

In the climactic passage of the poem this dichotomy is conveyed forcefully and compassionately by contrasting image patterns which reveal how fragile and defenceless the soldiers are. The rush of traditional ways in which man has sought protection has already been mentioned(*) in the discussion of the structure of this poem, but it is significant of Jones's theme that all these means of comfort and protection are non-technical, and that most derive from nature. The

(22) Dai Greatcoat op.cit. p.251

(*) See p.202

sweet flowing water, the linden hedge, the dock for the nettle sting, the sheltering reef, all recall nature in its gentle mothering role, and the other devices: the blanket over the head, the scutum, the pavise, the gunnel which keeps the sea from the boat, the defensive mounds of earth, all suggest man working in harmony with nature. This impression is made explicit in the paragraph which follows by the use of the metaphorical language: "You'd like a pavise to tortoise you." The pavise, the knight's convex shield which was carried before him by his squire to protect him from archers, brings to mind the greater humanness of Mediaeval warfare, and this quality is augmented by the warmly familiar and simple metaphor of the tortoise, as well as by the other images from nature: " ... or an hare's form for your kicking hind legs would be something. The foxes have holes but ..." (23) The denial of even these simple means of shielding themselves makes clear how vulnerable the soldiers are, and, conversely, how alien and terrible is this warfare in which there are neither human nor animal means of lessening its devastating power.

The fragment from Balaam's Ass marks the end of David Jones's "writings about war". Without a doubt, it is one of the most powerfully original works of the Great War, and as poetry or as a comment on the state of contemporary technological civilization deserves neither the blanket of obscurity which has covered it nor the indifference with which it has been treated. Jones's own diffidence about it and his insistence on its being a fragment have had much to do with this neglect, but, considering that it symbolizes a broken culture, there surely is an aesthetic rightness that it is indeed a fragment.

(23) The Sleeping Lord p.104

CHAPTER 7

Frederic Manning : Part One

The problem that Isaac Rosenberg and David Jones each had, of accommodating an individual heroic vision to a period of the War that seemed wholly alien to such a vision, was superbly overcome by Frederic Manning in his novel, The Middle Parts of Fortune (1929). The novel begins where In Parenthesis ended, in the latter half of the year 1916 on the Somme and Ancre Fronts, and is set in the period when the war had changed from, as Jones put it, "the Bairnsfather war", in which one could still find "the individual rifleman, the old sweat of the Boer campaign" (1), to a process of mechanized slaughter in a hideously deformed landscape. During this period of the war Manning's initial heroic outlook gradually became less idealistic and fanciful, at times reaching toward a Sassoon-like bitterness and anger, but by 1929, when he came to write his novel, he had synthesized these earlier and contemporary responses into a tragic and heroic vision of the conflict. In so far, therefore, that Manning brought to fruition what Rosenberg and Jones, for very different reasons, failed to accomplish, The Middle Parts of Fortune provides a proper conclusion to this study of the celebration of heroic virtue in the First World War.

It is fortunate that Manning, like Rosenberg, was an active writer of prose and poetry before and during the War, so that it is possible to see very clearly how his mature response to war developed, and thereby to gain insight into the remarkable vision of The Middle Parts of Fortune. Such a study of his earlier work has the additional

(1) David Jones : In Parenthesis Preface p.1x

advantage of allowing a fairer comparison of his achievement with that of Rosenberg, since the latter was denied the opportunity of writing the epic work that he was envisaging in 1917 and 1918. This chapter deals with Manning's growth as a writer, with particular reference to the development of his heroic vision, and supplies such biographical details as influenced strongly the way in which he regarded war.

Unlike Rosenberg and Jones, Manning came from an upper middle-class background. This, combined with a precocious literary talent, gave him an immediate entrée and acceptance into fashionable Edwardian cultural circles. The son of Sir William Patrick Manning, four times Lord Mayor of Sydney in Australia, Manning passed his youth in a comfortable, cultured home, sheltered even from the rigours of a public school, as he was considered too frail and asthmatic to survive Sydney Grammar School, which his more robust brothers attended. In 1898, when Manning was sixteen, he was allowed to go to England as ward of Arthur Galton, a notable English intellectual and writer. Galton had been serving as Private Secretary to the Governor of New South Wales for five years, and was returning to England to join the Anglican clergy. The handsome Georgian Vicarage in Edenham near the town of Bourne in Lincolnshire to which he moved thus became Manning's home until Galton's death in 1923.

Galton's influence on his ward and friend was considerable. His calm but deeply sincere approach to his religion nurtured the young Manning's belief in God, giving him a spiritual resilience which did much to enable him to survive the war mentally unscathed and, in later years, to place his war experience in a wider, tragic context. It will be seen in the following pages, which chart Manning's

development, that he went through phases of rebellion against his faith, including renouncing Roman Catholicism and conventional modes of worship and belief, but he was never to deny it wholly. He was never to become as overtly religious as David Jones, but it is clear from his poetry and prose that belief in a Christian God lies at the heart of his philosophy.

Galton's influence extended also to Manning's scholastic tastes and pursuits, so much so that the Obituary to him in 'The Times' in 1921 might equally apply to the adult Manning:

He was steeped in the Classics, and with his fine culture, scholarship, and distinction recalled the older tradition of learning and letters in the Church of England; yet his mind was essentially modern.

(2)

How well Galton transmitted his love of the Classics to Manning is apparent everywhere in Manning's writing, but particularly in the complete naturalness with which he employs classical images, and in his being stirred by the heroes of Greek and Roman mythology. This response of Manning's to the older heroic code would have been reinforced by the fascination that the atavistic heroes of legend exerted over Victorian and Edwardian poets, resulting not only in their own renderings of Nordic, Old English, Greek and Roman heroes, but of their giving a more elemental and romantic form to Malory's Arthurian heroes and to striking figures of history. Manning would have read Tennyson, Felicia Hemans, Browning, Morris, and Swinburne, and been influenced by them, for his first sustained piece of writing is in the vein of the heroic narrative poetry which they produced.

(2) Obituary on Arthur Galton : *The Times*, 22 July 1921

Written in 1907, The Vigil of Brunhild is a heroic portrait of a mediaeval Frankish queen, who has all the beauty, defiant courage, contempt for conventional morality, and thirst for change of Swinburne's Mary Queen of Scots or Morris's Guinevere. From the initial image of Brunhild as "an old eagle taken in the toils" through the gamut of conventional heroic tribute and description to the final image of the "sun quickening with golden fire the Alpine peaks" to express the heroic way in which she will meet her death, Manning's portrayal of her nowadays seems stereotyped, lacking the originality of Rosenberg's portrayal of Moses. Nevertheless, as an indication of the development of Manning's heroic vision The Vigil of Brunhild is invaluable, and is thus examined below in some detail. Moreover, it becomes abundantly evident, even from a reading of the introduction, that Manning was wholly inspired by his subject, and for this reason alone the piece warrants serious attention. What stirred Manning about Brunhild and his later heroes was the grand dimensions of the heroic spirit: the breadth of its passion and its aspirations; its fortitude; and the splendid disregard for the fears that inhibit the impulses of more ordinary people. The most interesting aspect of Manning's presentation of Brunhild is that, although ostensibly she is imbued with the noble ambition to create a unified and peaceful France from the chaos left by the Roman withdrawal, this aim appears entirely secondary to her lust to destroy her rival, Fredegonde, an upstart queen. Her account of her life ends with a valedictory speech on the ruins of her grand design, which is surely meant to justify her to history. Yet so powerful is the reader's recollection of her real passion that these admirable sentiments seem curiously flat:

"To build it up again! I dreamed to raise
 An empire on the ruins of the old,
 Whose seat should be the Rhine. I was a voice
 Crying within the wilderness. (3)

Her hatred, in contrast, burns constantly, consuming her whole life. Her joy in her baby almost immediately gives way to a furious desire to avenge the murder of her sister Galswith by Fredegonde. This hatred is beyond all reasonable bounds, as is shown by her refusal to be content, even when Sigebert, her husband, and his armies feel that honour is satisfied by their laying waste France, and taking Paris, Fredegonde's capital. The upshot of this thirst for the destruction of her enemies is that Sigebert is killed, and her territorial advantage is swept away. Yet, despite these disasters, she will admit to no regret in the final hours of her life, when she recalls her past. Indeed, with the arrogant assertion of her own power typical of the hero, she waves aside the proffered comfort of God and hope of heaven:

"Yea go. I will not call upon thy God;
 He is too far from me: could I again
 Have my old strength and beauty, I should waste
 Again the earth with my delight in war,
 And vex my body with the restless loves
 That my youth knew.

(4)

The rashness and splendid defiance of this speech must have delighted Manning, for he makes another such moment the most dramatic in the whole poem. It occurs after Brunhild has fallen in love with Merow, a young prince who suddenly appears when she is in exile in Rouen. Brunhild has every reason to mistrust Merow. Although he appears to hate Fredegonde as much as she does, he is Fredegonde's subject, and consequently was harassed by Sigebert's armies. He is a prince, but with his band of nobles he wanders France like a troubadour. Most sinister of all, one of Brunhild's most loyal pages has warned her that Fredegonde has instructed Merow to poison her. Nevertheless, when Merow approaches with a curiously wrought cup, asking her to drink to

(3) Frederic Manning : The Vigil of Brunhild (London 1907) p.55

(4) op.cit. p.3

confirm their pledge of loyalty, despite the page's start of horror, she fearlessly takes the cup from him and drains it. Brunhild's heroic stature comes not only from her appearing more passionate than ordinary men and women, but also from her pride and courage. The fierce pride, that disdains the solace of God, is evident on a number of other occasions, and it is clear that at these moments Manning intends her to appear grand and heroic. When she is introduced she is filthy and bedraggled, but her eyes "Held something kingly that could outfrown Fate", and when the priest nervously enters her filthy cell she is ready for battle with her persecutors, despite the degradation and hopelessness of her circumstances. She is impressive in her contempt for the scandal that she and the poet, Fortunatus, were lovers, a scandal which threatened to undo her, and she is equally impressive in the calm way in which she confronts her fast-approaching death, which she knows will be a hideous one. Her dignity is augmented by her beneficence to the priest in giving him the last of her worldly goods, the ring with which Merow wedded her. Brunhild's recognition, as her death draws near, of the priest's goodness is important, for it is an indication of Manning's own spiritual belief. As has been seen in the discussion of the earlier part of this poem, Manning was thrilled by the hero's defiance of God; but it seems that at this stage of his development he himself could not entirely accept that the heroic spirit was divorced from God.

The climax of these moments of heroic grandeur occurs when she recalls the disastrous turning of her fortunes, beginning with the murder of Merow. It is clear from the intensity of the heroic rhetoric that Manning intends her to be superb at this moment:

She rose into a calm, majestic realm,
That eagles might inhabit, with her mind

Intent upon the spectacle of life,
 Yet heedless of her fate; no shame could touch
 The soul that breathed in so serene an air,
 Superior to mortal accidents.
 But the priest felt that effluence from her
 Shed a strange glory round the humid cell
 And fill him with a fearful sense of fate: ...

(5)

Although one cannot doubt that the poet is genuinely inspired by the largeness and loftiness of the heroic nature, one can hardly fail to be disturbed by the awe-struck tone and the welter of admiring description of this passage.

A similar criticism may be made of the whole poem, for, all in all, one feels that there is in Manning's heroic portrayal of Brunhild an unfortunate lack of restraint which destroys the impact which she should have had. As was mentioned earlier, one of Manning's faults at this stage of his career as a writer is that he tends to employ the conventional and strenuously overworked epithets and devices of the heroic narrative poetry of his era. For instance, he has a propensity to compare Brunhild to an eagle and to other creatures of prey: she is variously described as "an old eagle taken in the toils", as "lifting her lion's head", as having "hate that is like a hound", thoughts that are like eagles, and as inhabiting a realm known only to eagles. The bards she hears singing the praises of her enemies in the hall above are, predictably, *ancient* bards, and, equally predictably, her eyes hold "something kingly" when they aren't holding hate; her pregnancy is "the promise of another spring/ Thrilling within my body", and in her lone quest to build an empire she is "a voice crying within a wilderness".

(5) op.cit. p.45

Every now and then, of course, there are glimmerings of the talent that was to produce The Middle Parts of Fortune. Despite being too caught up in the heroic rhetoric of his time, Manning does reveal an ease with language that would eventually give rise to the sensitive, mature style of his novel. A particularly clear instance of this facility manifests itself in a moment of lyrical fluency in his description of Brunhild's elation as she rides in triumph into Paris:

"The world I had won, before mine eyes
Broke into colour, motion, victory,
With banners breaking gay, and flashing steel
In serried ranks ..."

(6)

Another instance is his sensitive description of her grief when Merow's body is brought to her. One notices, in particular, Manning's awareness of the human needs in this situation:

"[I] knelt beside
The bier, and spoke to him. He heard me not:
For he had gone the irremeable way,
Into which darkness may not penetrate
The voice of love, nor yearning nor desire ...
...

Yet still I spoke to him,
As if, perchance, some whisper of my voice
Might stir the pools of silence where he lay, ..."

(7)

One cannot deny that Manning's account of Brunhild's disastrous career has considerable narrative power, reminiscent of Browning's dramatic monologues. Much of this comes from his skill in constantly playing off the "pageantry and splendour" of her past against her present predicament. It will be seen that he was to use this same technique to heighten the tragic sense of crisis in his novel.

The hold that the early heroic type had over Manning's imagination was not a transitory one. In 1910, he published a collection of poems in which the two principal works are ardently heroic. 'Theseus and Hippolyta', which opens the collection, concentrates on the splendour of Hippolyta as a warrior, and on the inspirational effect she has on the wild Amazons she leads. In order to give her maximum dramatic impact, Manning withholds her entry while he describes the final attack of Theseus on the Amazonian camp, and the Amazons' spirited but rapidly weakening attempt to repulse the Athenian soldiers. The scene is thus set for the entry of Hippolyta:

Through the stress
Of their shoulders drove as a share,
Hippolyta. Avenging she came,
And they streamed, and they surged round her car,
The women: her face was a flame
As she rode through the tempest of war;
And they cried, made glad with the sight,
As those desiring the dawn.

(8)

The end, of course, is the rape of Hippolyta by Theseus, giving Manning an opportunity to give full expression to a combination of elements which he found highly erotic: female beauty; fierce lust; and bloody warfare.

The second heroic poem, 'Helgi of Lithend', certainly gives free rein to this sensual blend, for it describes the savage winning of a Germanic princess, Gudrun, by the hero, Helgi. So atavistic a hero is Helgi that one wonders at first whether Manning was satirizing the type, but from his sympathetic treatment, later in the poem, of his hero's behaviour, and from the enthusiasm that is overt in his descriptions of violent action, it is clear that the poet still admires this sort of hero. Like The Vigil of Brunhild, 'Helgi of Lithend'

(8) Frederic Manning : Poems (John Murray, London 1910) p.3

is largely a lengthy flashback to a more youthful, more fiercely energetic past. It is wholly in the form of a dramatic monologue, and thus, permitting no opportunity for a narrator's comments and reflections, greatly emphasizes the instinctive, unreflective nature of the hero.

The poem opens with the dying Helgi furiously deriding the women of his court for daring to pray to their soft (presumably Christian) God for the deliverance of his soul to a gentle heaven. He is determined on Valhalla and the warrior's way to it:

I would go hence,
Over the loud ways of the sea again,
In my black ship, with all the war-shields out,
Nor, beaten, crawl unto the knees of God,
To whine there a whipped hound.

(9)

His gods are the Germanic warrior gods: "Tall Odin, and his golden-mailed sons" and "Balder, the bright beautiful Balder", and he envisages himself riding with them:

Over the glittering Bifrost bridge with Thor
And the great host of heroes; with the wind
Playing upon our banners, and the dawn
Leaping as flame from all the lifted swords,
And press of spears: ...

(10)

The passage reveals strongly the very great attraction that the free heroic spirit held for Manning. Helgi is arrogant, blasphemous, and brutal, but the lyrical, nostalgic quality of the extract suggests the poet's approbation rather than censure. So too with his account of the chief event of his story, the capture of "his kingly spoil", Gudrun. His repellent rapaciousness and bloodthirstiness are constantly offset by his heroic deportment. When his subjects point out that Sigurd,

(9) Manning : op.cit. p.44

(10) op.cit. p.46

Gudrun's lover, will come to take her, and burn Lithend in revenge, Helgi retorts as befits a hero: "Sigurd will come! Why then, let Sigurd come." Even when one of his subjects sees the Valkyries one night on a moor, weaving their terrible web of war, he remains undismayed, and eagerly scans the sea for sight of Sigurd's sails.

When Sigurd does come, "long-haired and great of limb" with "his helm winged, flaming in the sunlight", the two meet before their armies in single combat. Helgi at this moment shows all the prowess, courage, and insouciance proper to a hero, for he leaps out to meet his formidable and enraged opponent "so men say/ Laughing", and deals him a mighty death-blow "through the angry face". At the end of the battle, he behaves with perfect courtesy and honour, cremating Sigurd on his burning ship, as befits a hero.

Manning's involvement in the psychology of the heroic personality, noticeable in The Vigil of Brunhild, seems to have been developing in the three year interlude, for in this poem it is evident that he is more aware of the limitations of this personality. He realized that such a nature, wholly given up to a fierce love of action, and the consequent nurturing of physical attributes, is bound to be deficient in other human qualities. This is particularly apparent in his depiction of Helgi's relationship with Gudrun. According to Helgi's simple warrior code, because he has won Gudrun in battle and has destroyed his rival, she should love him. He is thus baffled and frustrated all his life that she never wholly does, despite her submission to his love-making. He reacts violently to anything that he cannot understand and which threatens his straightforward view of life. Thus, he not only furiously forbids the Christian women of his court to pray for his soul, but envisages "battering at the crystal

walls of Heaven" with Thor and the company of heroes from Valhalla, and burning and rampaging until "all the streets of jasper, chalcedony and pearl" are "slippery with bloodshed". The appalling excess of this vision is in itself a clear condemnation of Helgi and thus, as in the case of Brunhild, one realizes Manning's ambivalent attitude to the old heroic standard which derides non-military virtues.

What then emerges from this later portrayal of the hero is, that while Manning had not ceased to be attracted to the classical hero, he had become a good deal more critical and searching of him than he had been when he wrote Brunhild. He was thus revealing a readiness to explore the whole question of heroism more thoroughly, and it was this adoption of a more open attitude that was ultimately to lead to his being able to perceive the nature of heroism in the First World War.

While three considerable heroic poems reveal how strong was the early heroic bias in Manning's thinking, and give insight into his later response to the soldier in the trenches, his experiments in fiction are as important for understanding how he came to write a novel of the calibre of The Middle Parts of Fortune. These are, principally, five short stories which he published in 1909 under the title Scenes and Portraits, and an unfinished historical romance on which he worked fitfully for most of his life, The Golden Coach, which was set in the France of the Sun King. Pound read a section of this romance in 1920, and described it to T E Lawrence as "a hundred delicious pages" (11). Pound had been as enthusiastic about Scenes and Portraits in 1909, and his opinion was echoed by a number of other

(11) Paige D D (ed.) : The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941 (Faber, London 1951) p.219

critics. "While we have Mr.Manning to write prose for us, there is no need to despair of English style" (12) said the *Times Literary Supplement*. "Since Mr.Arnold, there has been no such ironist in this country as the author of Scenes and Portraits" said the *Edinburgh Review*.(13); and in *The Observer*: "They have a curious originality, and, though fantastic in the extreme, are always singularly alert and attractive." (14)

Despite all this current critical approval, these stories have not weathered well the seventy-six intervening years. They hover, too much for modern taste, between being essays and short stories, containing lengthy pieces of philosophical debate garnered from a number of works Manning considered crucial in the development of Western European culture. Much of this philosophy is presented in a heavy, unsynthesized form, which Manning attempts, unsuccessfully, to lighten by having characters in the stories either fall asleep with boredom with the speaker or whisper to each other that he is prolix. Manning was annoyed that one of the stories was greatly preferred by the general public, apparently failing to see that 'The King of Unik' was more popular because the exposition of ideas is more balanced by the narrative movement and character interest. But, however unsatisfactory as a collection of short stories it may nowadays appear, Scenes and Portraits is invaluable for revealing the epic sweep of Manning's thinking, the development of style and portrayal of character, and his considerable culture and scholarship.

(12) *Times Literary Supplement*, October 1909

(13) *Edinburgh Review*, October 1909

(14) *The Observer*, October 1909

In his six stories, Manning delineates the dynamic and cyclical nature of the history of Western civilization over the last two thousand years. Beginning with a controversial version of Adam and Eve based on modern Biblical scholarship, he charts the changes in belief brought about by great men who have had the vision and energy to break with established modes of thinking. The training in comprehension, and in selection of a huge and varied amount of material that such an ambitious scheme as this involves must have stood Manning in good stead when, in writing his novel, he had to come to terms with remembered experiences and impressions of the war that would have appeared as vast, as varied, and infinitely more inchoate.

Manning's nascent ability to characterize is evident in his heroic poems, but, as has been seen, he was constrained by the well-established pattern of the heroic nature, and so Hippolyta and Brunhild, and even Helgi, are more stereotypes than believable human beings. He was able to be much less inhibited in his characterization in Scenes and Portraits, particularly in 'The King of Unik', where there was no well-defined historical or mythical model to check his fancy, and where, in the court of King Merodach, one catches amusing glimpses of the social circles in which Manning moved.

Queen Parysatis is, as her name suggests, a satire on one or more of the fashionable 'literary' women whose salons Manning frequented in London. The first view of the Queen is a typical one: she is found lying amidst a heap of silk cushions, languidly watching a tragedy; leaving her daughter, Princess Candace, in whose honour she is giving a birthday feast, to amuse herself. As the languid interest she shows in tragedy reveals, she has intellectual pretensions, but

she rapidly becomes bored, and, before the High Priest, Bagaos, has finished his philosophical preamble to his tale of Adam, she is weary. She has no qualms about letting him know this, and interrupts him, and makes loud 'whispered' remarks about his long-windedness to the king; not that Bagaos cares, as he sails on regardless. Again, not without reason, she finds the verses of her attendant poet, Mekerah, wearisome:

"The old look upon the stars," sang the poet, "they seek wisdom in the heavens; but I look into the eyes of my beloved. What stars are like her eyes? What wisdom can compare with the wisdom of love?"

"You have said the same thing a hundred times," complained the Queen.

(15)

However, when her future son-in-law, whom she has decided to like, comes out with exactly the same "delicate song" to Candace, she pretends to be enchanted, suggesting the capriciousness which Manning and other young poets probably suffered from such women.

"The old look upon the stars," he sang ...

"He is a true poet," said Parysatis to Mekerah. "What spirit, what fire!"

"I have said the same thing an hundred times," said Mekerah crossly.

"Precisely," said Parysatis, "he has said it once, perfectly."

(16)

The keen eye that notes the foibles of the upper classes can be equally perceptive of other nuances of human behaviour. The somewhat conventional portrait of the charming little princess, for instance, is lifted quite out of the ordinary by Manning's observation of her reaction to adult laughter:

(15) Frederic Manning : Scenes and Portraits (John Murray, London 1907) p.30

(16) op.cit. p.50

Here Merodach and the Queen Parysatis laughed at the simplicity of Adam, and the Princess Candace also laughed, because she could not understand why they were amused. Bagaos looked at his audience with a faint tolerant smile.

(17)

As one might infer from the "faint tolerant smile", Bagaos stands apart from Merodach and his court, viewing them with an amused detachment. Immeasurably more far-seeing, more perceptive, more sophisticated than they are, and wholly unscrupulous, he is greatly entertained by the parade of human weakness and vanity that goes on around him, by his ability to play on these foibles, and especially by his manipulation of King Merodach himself. Outside the court, he is as entertained by Adam and Eve, partly because he senses in them the origins of a civilization which will supplant his own, and partly because he feels challenged by their innocence and obedience to their God, and is intrigued to know whether he can pervert them:

"How came it that this particular tree should be forbidden to you?' I enquired of them, for I was curious of the spiritual workings of their minds.

"In the day that we came into this garden,' answered Adam, 'I had a desire to eat of the fruit, and I stretched my hand toward the tree when I heard a voice upon the wind, saying: 'In the day that ye eat thereof ye shall surely die.'"

"It is curious,' I murmured. 'The fruit is wholesome, one would think that to eat thereof would give life rather than death.'

"If we ate of the fruit would we not die?' enquired Eve.

"If ye ate of it you would know,' I answered, smiling at the simplicity of the question: ..."

(18)

For us, the interest in Bagaos extends beyond that which is intrinsic to such a character, for he is clearly the author's persona, and thus, in some respects, a fore-runner of Bourne, the principal character of The Middle Parts of Fortune.

It was primarily through recognizing the similarities in style between Scenes and Portraits and Her Privates We (the expurgated version of The Middle Parts of Fortune published in 1929) that T E Lawrence guessed the novel's authorship, and wrote to Manning praising it.(19) Indeed, evident in the passage above are the marks of fine writing that distinguish The Middle Parts of Fortune: the clarity and balance; and above all the adaptation of style to character which is so impressive in the novel. Here, Manning brings out the goodness and simplicity of Adam's nature, and its dreaming, sensitive side, by the lyrical beauty and simplicity of the Biblical language. The ingenuousness of Eve is also caught in the childlike question, but the fact that it is she who asks Bagaos a question, while Adam supplies firm answers, reveals the difference in their natures, and hints at her weakness. Their speech contrasts markedly with the blandly reasonable and ironic tone of Bagaos, and the contrast seems to give a sinister undertone to his words. Knowing the consequences of what he says, his use of the word 'curious' is especially chilling, for it reveals his detachment from Adam and Eve. They are merely objects of scientific interest.

The mastery of his medium so evident in this passage makes it probable that 'The King of Uruk' was the last of the pieces which Manning wrote in 1909 for Scenes and Portraits, on which he began work in 1904. It is appropriate that he dedicates this story to Arthur Galton, for in none of the other stories is Galton's own delicacy and clarity more manifest. It was from Galton in particular, and from a thorough familiarity with Ancient Greek literature and philosophy which Galton had engendered in him, that the young Manning developed

(19) Garnett D (ed.) : The Letters of T E Lawrence (Jonathan Cape, London 1938) p.682

a reverence for prose, and felt the wrongness of its being regarded merely as "the rude material from which a poet works." This was the attitude of many poets of the Edwardian and early Georgian period, and one which the Imagists would attack in the next decade. Manning, in fact, was to join with T S Eliot and Richard Aldington in 1920, by writing one of three crucial articles for *The Chapbook* which argued that there should no longer be a rigid boundary between poetry and prose*. At this stage he was more concerned with the excellence of his style than the distinction or lack of distinction between poetry and prose. Apparently, he spent a long time carefully revising Scenes and Portraits, and, indeed, the balance and control of the dialogue in the passage above make it clear that Manning's art is highly conscious.

The acute awareness of the processes of composition and style in his own writing made Manning a perceptive critic of the work of others. The moderate success of Scenes and Portraits led to Manning's being offered a fair amount of review work, particularly by *The Observer* and *The Spectator*. Such work must have done much for his own writing. It gave him exposure to a great deal of literature past and contemporary; it forced him to write regularly in prose - an invaluable experience for one who tended to be overly fastidious, and therefore slow, in his own writing; and it forced him to clarify and examine every aspect of the writing of prose.

Another potent influence on Manning's early career (suggested earlier in this chapter) was Ezra Pound. They met in 1909, soon after Pound had arrived in London; and, despite the difficulties of Pound's brash and volatile temperament, remained friends for the rest of Manning's life. Pound was particularly taken by Manning's dry

* See *The Chapbook* ed. H Monro, no.22 April 1921

wit, even when it was at his expense. "Manning," he wrote to an American protégée who had requested a self-portrait, "in one of his more envenomed moments once said something about 'More like Khr-r-ist and the late James Whistler every year.'" (20) Kaiser Haq says (21) that it was Scenes and Portraits which inspired Pound to try historical sketches of his own, which he included in Pavannes and Divisions in 1918. He must have endeared himself to Manning early in their relationship, for he lost no time after their first meeting in reading Brunhild, and writing an approving review of it for *The Book News Monthly* (a Philadelphia publication). Considering the conventional form and content of this poem, this approbation comes as something of a surprise, until it is recalled that at this period of his life Pound was deeply absorbed by the poetry of the Troubadours, which contains a strong element of the heroic.

It is not known whether Pound pointed out directly to Manning what he felt was wrong with his poetry, or whether Manning was receptive enough to what Pound himself was producing - and was saying about poetry in his lectures and articles - to see the need for a more progressive attitude to his writing; but certainly Manning told Pound that he had "loosened something" in him. (22) He never became fully involved in the Imagist movement, whose creed was chiefly a formulation of Pound's ideas on literature, but it is evident from the greater vigour and clarity of his own style in prose and poetry, and in the nature of the critical judgements on the work of others which he made after he had met Pound, that he was affected by its

(20) Letters of Ezra Pound op.cit., 13 July 1916, p.13

(21) Kaiser Haq : 'Forgotten Fred' op.cit. p.55

(22) Manning : Letter to Pound (7 January 1912) quoted in 'Forgotten Fred' op.cit. p.65

principles. Indeed, without the influence of Pound's full-blooded and definite approach to literature it seems possible that Manning, given his tendency to be retiring and precious in the choice and treatment of his subject matter, would himself have fallen into the very trap of over-aestheticism into which he believed Swinburne and Lionel Johnson had tumbled. Writing on Swinburne in *The Spectator*, he revealed the vagueness of Swinburne's imagery and thinking, and the readiness to sacrifice everything to obtain certain qualities of sound: "What is lacking in Swinburne is any constructive imagination strong enough to bear up and inform the wealth of detail by which this effect of tonal mistiness is achieved." (23) In his critical summing up of the literary achievement of Lionel Johnson one sees even more a way in which Manning himself might have developed: "The letters themselves have little interest, though they show an extraordinary command of language and a sense of style. ... His life was simply a denial of this reality; religion and letters were to him a form of anaesthesia, a means of escape, not only from the world but from himself." (24)

Manning's own vital response to religion and his fellow men was so integral a part of his life that one can understand why he viewed Swinburne's escapist attitude with disapprobation. As it was mentioned earlier, he had an unconventional critical religious belief which was strengthened by the experience of war. He attributed the endurance of his faith to its unorthodox nature:

When I attempt to form any notion of God the whole of life becomes quite irrelevant to the matter. If I were an orthodox Christian this war would have shattered my belief

(23) Frederic Manning : 'The Poet as a Virtuoso' in *The Spectator*,
24 July 1915 p.115

(24) Manning : 'Some Winchester Letters' in *The Spectator*,
10 January 1920, p.52

in Christianity; but being a Christian to whom 'Christianity' is a merely formal symbol, the war does not effect (*sic*) the question for me. The spirit of Christ was one which considered every particular case entirely upon its own merits: he did not set out to measure life by means of any principle or set of principles. That is why his words on one occasion will often seem to contradict his words on another. The attraction of Christ's personality consists precisely in this, that he formulated no system.

(25)

Manning's war began in October 1915, when he volunteered as a Private in the King's Shropshire Light Infantry. He told William Rothenstein that he felt his lack of experience in handling men made him unsuitable officer material; but it was an unusual choice for one of his background, and, like Bourne, the middle-class ranker of his novel, he was questioned repeatedly about it. In April 1916, he was actually sent for Officer Training in Oxford, but his performance as a cadet was less than satisfactory, and he was back in the K.S.L.I. after less than eight weeks. In August 1916, he was posted to the Regiment's seventh battalion, then in the thick of the fighting on the Somme. No doubt contrary to his family's expectations, he proved himself to be an able and tough soldier, returning to England in late December only because he was wounded, not due to asthma. On his recovery, he was again recommended for Officer Training, and this time, probably because he was more amenable to the idea, he stayed the course, and was commissioned in May 1917. He was posted as a subaltern to the Royal Irish, and was sent to help train recruits with one of the Regiment's reserve battalions stationed at Tipperary. Manning loathed the job and most of his brother officers as well, and within weeks he was put under open arrest for insubordination to his C.O. He was let off lightly, but it was fortunate that, immediately after the incident,

(25) Manning : Letter to William Rothenstein, 10 November 1916, quoted in William Rothenstein : Men and Memories (Faber and Faber, London 1922) pp.297-8

he had a minor breakdown. Shell-shock was diagnosed, and rest was prescribed. This was followed by a transfer to Dublin, where he 'survived' thanks to his being befriended by the gentle and urbane George Russel, an old friend of Rothenstein, who lived there, and was the very antithesis of the 'military types' with whom he was forced to associate. He resigned his commission in February, and finally returned to England on the eve of Armistice.

It is revealing of Manning's turmoil and unhappiness as an officer that his only creative period in the war, and the one which would provide the material and inspiration for his novel, was his term as a private soldier in the trenches. As far as can be ascertained, the eighteen war poems which make up Manning's entire creative output of the war years were all written while he was at the Front. They thus span only seven months, but, as one would imagine, the enormity and the intensity of this experience brought about radical changes in his outlook.

At first sight Manning might seem to follow the pattern, common to many of the trench poets, of having initially a romantic heroic view of the war which gradually became closer to reality and then more embittered. The arrangement of his war poems in the collection published in April 1917* supports this assumption, because it begins with 'Idola', a poem that speculates on death in the heroic, romantic manner and ends with 'Grotesque', a poem that savagely rejects the heroic tradition. However, despite the real and passionate bitterness of lines such as these in the following extract, they represent only one facet of Manning's response to the war:

* Frederic Manning : Poems (John Murray, London 1917)

These are the damned circles Dante trod,
 Terrible in hopelessness,
 But even skulls have their humour,
 An eyeless and sardonic mockery:
 And we,
 Sitting with streaming eyes in the acrid smoke,
 That murks our foul, damp billet,
 Chant bitterly, with raucous voices
 As a choir of frogs
 In hideous irony, our patriotic songs.

(26)

The range of subject matter that his other war poems cover, and the different and several attempts he makes to come to terms with the destruction, suggest that he, like Rosenberg, had a more open approach to the war than those who sought principally to articulate its agonies. One wonders when the idea came about for a major work that would comprehend and give shape to his disparate experiences and impressions recorded in his poems. There is no evidence that he was imbued during the war, as Rosenberg was, with a plan for such a work, but Peter Davies, a publisher and friend, more or less incarcerated Manning in a London flat for six months, until he had written 'his war novel', so presumably the idea of it had been developing and refining itself in his mind for a long time before that.

In 'The Choosers' he conveys both his apprehension of the arbitrary nature of death and his wish to link the troops of 1916 with warriors of the past through his use of the Valkyrie myth. It will be recalled from the commentary on Isaac Rosenberg's 'Daughters of War' that the Valkyries held considerable fascination for poets of the nineteenth century, and from them they became part of the war generation's store of symbols. Richard Aldington was probably the first to see their potential as a symbol for this conflict, and he uses them as Rosenberg was to do, to convey his sense of the immense

and irresistible destructive power of modern warfare*. Manning's 'choosers of the slain' (the alternative title of the Valkyries) are almost devoid of this devastating aspect, and appear as a cross between attractive, elusive wood-nymphs and martial angels. It would seem, therefore, that in this poem, which at first appears to have nothing to do with the war, Manning intends to soften the harshness of death by presenting it as something to be desired.

In the opening verse, the 'choosers' have a sly, sylvan charm as "haunters of the deep glades", but by the end of the third verse they have taken on an aspect that is closer to the accepted idea of the warrior Valkyries. In accordance with Germanic legend, they are impatient of the soldiers' earthly life, and rejoice that they may soon claim them as their warriors:

Men are but shadows! And prone about me
 I see them, hushed and sleeping in the hut,
 Made solemn and holy by the night,
 As sleep, in hewn sepulchral caves,
 Egypt's and Asia's kings.
 While between them are the footsteps
 Of glittering presences, who say: Lo, one
 To be a sword upon my thigh!
 And the sleepers stir restlessly and murmur
 As between them pass
 The bright-mailed choosers of the dead.

(27)

Manning's portrayal of the sleeping soldiers recalls the moving portrayal by David Jones of the dead German soldiers lying in a wood on the banks of the Somme:

* see Richard Aldington : Collected Poems (Allen & Unwin, London 1929)
 p.68

(27) Frederic Manning : Poems (John Murray, London 1917) pp.1-2

... these long strangers,
 under this vaulting stare upward,
 for recumbent princes of his people.
 Stone lords coiffed
 long-skirted field-grey to straight fold
 for a coat-armour
 and for a cere-cloth, for men of renown: ...

(28)

The correspondence between the two passages comes from the poets' desire to impart a dignity and warrior pride and nobility to the troops of the First World War. The linking of the soldiers to the warrior princes of the past is the main way in which this effect is achieved, but as striking is the quietness of the still forms of the sleeping or dead men. However, the comparison of the two passages also has the effect of throwing up the weakness of Manning's poem. While Jones's use of metaphor is exact and expertly interwoven with what he actually saw, Manning's 'Egyptian and Asian kings' and 'choosers' metaphors are much less precisely used and not integrated, and consequently less resonant. One is critical too of the unexplained change in the depiction of the 'choosers' from sylvan sprites, to fiery spirits, awesome in their resolution and bright-mailed splendour, then, in the final stanza, to naked females wreathed in ivy.

Not surprisingly, Manning did not pursue this particular Valkyrie fantasy after he had had experience of the trenches. Instead, in 'Sacrifice', he turned to a consolation that seemed more fitting for his predicament, but which, in the form in which he envisaged it, was as out of touch with the realities of his situation as was being swept up by an alluring female spirit. He not only identified his ordeal and the ordeal of the Allied troops fighting in the trenches with the ordeal of Christ on Calvary, but also saw a common purpose in their

suffering. This apprehension of the Christlike nature of their sacrifice is apparent in the poem from Manning's application of certain key words of the mass (*love, travail, perfect and sufficient sacrifice*) which describe Christ's immolation, to the dying of the soldiers. It is apparent, too, in his intimation that they, more than any other soldiers in history, are Christlike, because their fight, like His, is devoid of all the traditional pageantry and splendour of battle:

For us no splendid apparel of pageantry,
 Burnished breast-plates, scarlet banners, and trumpets
 Sounding exultantly.
 But the mean things of the earth hast thou chosen,
 Decked them with suffering,
 Made them beautiful with the passion for rightness,
 Strong with the pride of love.

(29)

It is evident also in his assertion that their sacrifice will enable others to live, and in the even more questionable assertion that, in their emulation of Christ's sacrifice, they enable Him to fulfil his life-giving role. This mystical transformation of their blood into Christ's blood leaves no doubt that Manning saw a miniature Calvary in every British soldier's death. Such a conception now seems as presumptuous as it is absurd, but in the First World War the image of *Christlike* soldier, at least, was so widely held that it was used to great effect in a number of propaganda posters. Not that 'Sacrifice' is a mere adumbration of current propaganda. The intensity of the religious feeling in this poem strikes the reader as genuine and uncontrived. Consequently, despite the emotionalism and rhetoric of the writing, one feels the pathos of the poet's need to find an explanation of what is happening to him and to his fellows.

As well as seeing the soldier as a Christ, it is apparent from the second stanza (quoted above: "For us no splendid apparel ...") that Manning is envisaging him in the way in which the public schools and the propagandists encouraged strenuously - as a Christian knight. Admittedly, he makes the obvious observation that the splendid apparel of pageantry has gone from the modern battlefield, but he infers that all the qualities that made up the romantic conception of the knight endure in the khaki-clad troops of the First World War: humility; gallantry; loyalty to God, King and country unto death; strength; courage; gaiety; and, most significantly of all, conviction in the rightness of the cause (passion for rightness). Such a hero was a far cry from the wild, self-assertive heroes Manning had favoured before the War, for, like Rosenberg's Moses, a Helgi or Brunhild was hardly feasible in the trenches.

Manning's sharp critical sense and longer experience of the trenches seem to have combined to rescue him from the pitfalls of romantic emotionalism and from holding a view of the soldier that was out of touch with the realities of the situation, for after 'Sacrifice' his poems begin to alter in attitude, though not in style despite two forays into Imagism. However, as will be seen, before anger and disillusionment with the war set in, there are surprising reversions to the romantic heroic mode, inspired, it seems, by current propaganda. All of these factors make the course of Manning's response to the war and the development of his thinking hard to understand. One recalls that Manning, both by his army rank and social reticence, was not part of the Sassoon/ Owen/ Graves milieu, and was thus isolated from their critical, anti-establishment views.

The first sign of a changing attitude in Manning is in his portrayal of the soldier. The images of Warrior of Odin, Christ, and Christian Knight suddenly disappear, to be replaced by much less momentous and less dramatic images. In 'Relieved', the poem which immediately follows 'Sacrifice', the tired troops marching back to camp after a term in the trenches are presented at first as automata. It is significant of his shift in attitude that the "flying feet of the forest-haunters" in the 'Choosers' and the feet of the "God of sorrows" coming "softly thro' the dew" in 'Sacrifice' have abruptly given way to the regular tread of the soldier:

We are weary and silent,
There is only the rhythm of marching feet;
Tho' we move tranced, we keep it
As clock-work toys.

(30)

The increased awareness of what is happening to them - noticeable in these lines - leads on to a sensitive recognition of the inner state of the soldiers. The strain of trench duty, including enduring almost ceaseless bombardment from high explosives, has made them withdraw from "the world in which [they] move", for their "eyeballs have been seared with fire", but Manning realizes that within themselves they remain intact:

Only we have our secret thoughts,
Our sense floats out from us, delicately apprehensive,
To the very fringes of our being,
Where light drowns.

(31)

It is interesting to contrast Manning's intimate appraisal with Owen's early impression of troops at the front:

(30) Manning : Poems (1917) p.5

(31) *ibid.*

On all the officers' faces there is a harassed look that I have never seen before, and which in England, never will be seen - out of jails. The men are just as Bairnsfather has them - expressionless lumps.

We feel the weight of them hanging on us.

(32)

Owen was, of course, to develop enormously in his understanding of and compassion for the "expressionless lumps", but the officer outlook that emerges in these lines was, in its essentials, to remain and to impose limits on his response which were unknown to Manning. These limits have been fully discussed earlier, but it will be recalled that they tended to lead, in poetry and in prose, to the presentation of 'other ranks' only as idealized victims. The wider view which was possible for Manning, Rosenberg, and Jones, as soldiers from the ranks, is thus of particular value.

In this context, Manning's revelation, in 'Reaction', of the sexual craving of the troops at the Front gives a glimpse of them which is very rarely found in the poetry of officers, who tend to portray sex in a sublimated, homosexual form. Manning's poem is an erotic fantasy of an innocent but highly sensual Aphrodite, coming amidst battle-stained, lice-infested, lustful troops. Manning is deliberately being harshly realistic, but, unlike many of the trench poets, his urge to be so proceeds not so much from a desire to puncture the heroic-romantic balloon, but from the heightening of the eroticism by the crude maleness of the soldiers. That Manning was not intending an exposé of the degrading effects of battle, in the manner of Herbert Read's 'Happy Warrior', is supported by what he does in other parts of the poem, such as in his use of chivalric language in the line: "And we turn from the harshness of swords"; in his linking

(32) Wilfred Owen : Letter of 4th January 1917, in The Collected Poems ed. C Day Lewis (Chatto & Windus, London 1971) p.21

their grim world with the world of classical legend; and in his picturing the seduction of Aphrodite as taking place not in a bleak hut, but "in the golden straw/ Of these great Gothic barns,/ With curious curved beams arching, as in shadowy aisles..." It is interesting that the only other poet to share Manning's delight in the magnificent ecclesiastical architecture of the French tithe barns is David Jones*. One notes, too, that neither poet uses the barn as one might expect, to point up the ugliness of his condition, but sees it as part of an older, nobler order to which he still in a significant way belongs.

The attempt to cut free from the propaganda of the romantic heroic view of war and to be more truthful is also evident in Manning's modified estimation of the soldiers' relationship with God. The hubris of his conception of the soldier as Christ has given way to a humble acknowledgement of his great need for God. 'The Old Calvary', a poem of the thoughts and feelings aroused by the sight of an old wood Calvary propped in the corner of a yard, is a simple and moving expression of this altered state. A more explicit statement of his view of the relationship of man in war to God follows in 'The Sign'. This is a significant poem in Manning's development, because it reveals the insights that would form the basis of the philosophy that informs The Middle Parts of Fortune, namely that "war is waged by men; not by beasts; or by gods" (33); and yet, amidst the chaos and tumult of man's warring, God's peace remains to him. However, the complex moral issues raised, in particular by the first of these beliefs, have

* See In Parenthesis p.13: "They were given lectures on very wet days in the barn, with its great roof, sprung, upreaching, humane and redolent of a vanished order."

(33) Frederic Manning : The Middle Parts of Fortune (Peter Davies, London 1978) Author's prefatory note

gone unremarked by Manning, both in this poem and in those which follow. Indeed, it was not until he came to write his novel that he was able to examine the implications of the recognition of a collective responsibility for war. That he was not able to do so while he was embroiled in the war was probably because he had, at this stage, conflicting attitudes to war: on the one hand he was appalled by the destruction; and on the other thrilled by it. This ambivalent attitude is clearly evident in the second of the two stanzas quoted below:

It is in this wise that God speaketh unto me.
 He layeth hands of healing upon my flesh,
 Stilling it in an eternal peace.
 Until my soul reaches out myriad and infinite hands
 Toward him;
 And is eased of its hunger. And I know that this passes:
 This implacable fury and torment of men,
 As a thing insensate and vain:
 And the stillness hath said unto me,
 Over the tumult of sounds and shaken flame,
 Out of the terrible beauty of wrath,
I alone am eternal.

(34)

This vision is remarkably close to that of Isaac Rosenberg, both poets responding creatively to the enormous and uncontrolled release of energy that modern warfare entails, and both finding their metaphor in the Valkyries. It is significant, too, that they both acknowledge man's responsibility for the unleashing of this terrible power - a response very different from that of Wilfred Owen, who detached the combat troops wholly from the liability for war.

However, the experience of the terrible battle of Mametz Wood on the Somme Front in August 1916 shocked Manning out of fanciful speculations on the dead, and brought him to consider soberly the cost, in human terms, of the destructive beauty of war. Instead of

picturing the bodies as transformed into the perfection of Greek statues, he gives a grimly realistic description:

Heavy the clay upon our lips.
The gray rats fear us not, but pass quickly, sated,
Over prone trunks, rent limbs, dead faces,
That are ashen under the moon.

(35)

He still tries to hold to his earlier belief that they are issuing in a new and glorious age, but the strain of doing so in the face of such a reality is reflected in these lines:

Lo, in us the glory of a new being,
A wonder, a terror, an exultation,
Even in the filth of our shambles,
Loosened as lightnings upon us, devouring us;
Till we be but a shaken wrath of flames,
A many-tongued music of thunder,
Beyond the thunder of guns.
And we fail beneath it,
Sink into our ashes, cower as dogs;
While the glory of many shaken flames
Drowns in the gray of thy dawns, That reveal unto us
Earth wasted and riven with iron and fire.
Desolate!

(36)

The strength of the final images of the devastated earth seems to deny all positive belief in the soldiers' purpose in the war. 'Bois de Mametz' thus charts a significant stage in the development of Manning's vision of the war, because it reveals that he finally found the old romantic, heroic conception of war which had shaped his early response to be untenable. It has been seen that, although he very soon sensed something of its inadequacy to portray the war truthfully, he was still susceptible to certain aspects of its propaganda.

(35) Frederic Manning : 'Bois de Mametz' in Poems (1917) p.19

(36) op.cit. pp.19-20

Revealing the same tension between an heroic conception of men and an unheroic actuality as in 'Bois de Mametz' is 'The Face', a poem which makes skilful use of imagist technique:

Out of the smoke of men's wrath,
The red mist of anger,
Suddenly,
As a wraith of sleep,
A boy's face, white and tense,
Convulsed with terror and hate,
The lips trembling. ...

Then a red smear, falling. ...
I thrust aside the cloud, as it were tangible,
Blinded with a mist of blood.
The face cometh again
As a wraith of sleep:
A boy's face delicate and blonde,
The very mask of God,
Broken.

(37)

The movement of the verse, which compels the eye rapidly to the climactic, ultimate line, is immensely effective in this poem, as it mirrors the suddenness of the coming of death and the motion of the toppling soldier, whose face, in its different and terrible forms, torments and haunts Manning. Emphasizing its haunting, nightmarish quality is his use of the phrase 'wraith of sleep' to introduce both the first impression of the soldier's face when he is under fire, and the last, when he has been shot. These impressions are deeply shocking, because they are so contrary to the established notion of a soldier's face in battle - of a fearless, strong and proud face looking resolutely forward - a notion derived from age-old heroic and chivalric codes of behaviour and celebrated countless times in literature and in painting. Manning reinforces our sense of what we *should* be seeing by making explicit reference in the penultimate lines of the poem to the heroic conception of man, and thus the shattering of the image in the last line, the realization that 'the very mask of

God' has become a 'red smear', comes upon us with violence.

It might appear that at this point in Manning's career as a war poet he was vacillating, and had no firm central vision as Rosenberg had, but in fact his wider, more experimental approach led ultimately to his triumphantly avoiding the fault that besets Rosenberg's "haughty athletes", that, *in toto* at least, they are inadequate to portray the troops of the First World War convincingly.

A further undercutting of the heroic stance takes place in 'The Trenches', a lengthy descriptive poem in which Manning gives an evocative glimpse of life in that 'underworld' and examines the terrible, enervating effects of trench warfare on the human spirit. Manning describes the reaction of a sentry to the dead that he can see in No Man's Land. He regards them without pity, and with an indifference that allows him to see an element of ridicule and grotesqueness in their stiffness:

And he sees before him
With indifferent eyes the blasted and torn land
Peopled with stiff prone forms, stupidly rigid,
As tho' they had not been men.

(38)

The metamorphosis, which the sentry perceives, from men to something alien and grotesque, takes on a more horrifying form at the end of the poem, where the corpses are "... strewn/ In bloody fragments, to be the carrion/ Of rats and crows." This depiction of the dead in 'The Trenches' stands at the very opposite pole to the warriors' fate which Manning envisaged for them in 'The Choosers', and indeed, in this mood of bitter disillusionment with the heroic romantic view of war, Manning seems bent on reversing all his earlier heroic beliefs.

The rightness that he felt in the soaring beauty of the great arches of the Mediaeval barn, lending a grace and nobility to their purpose, has given way to a feeling that anything beautiful is wholly incongruous in the war. He expresses this change of mood in a poem laconically named 'Transport', in which he sets the dreary commonplaceness of army mules against two splendid grey stallions that passed him one night, illuminated by moonlight. The anthropomorphism in his description of the mules suggests that he was seeing in them the unattractive qualities of bitter patience and gracelessness that he felt the grind of war had produced in the troops.

The suggestion of disparagement at what the men have been reduced to by the war appears again in 'Grotesque'. From this poem's having been quoted earlier to reveal the extent of Manning's disenchantment with the war, it will have been noted that his disillusionment takes the unusual form of making the troops its target. One is accustomed to satirical attacks in poetry on the uncaring and uncomprehending civilians, but never on the troops. Admittedly, he is also pointing out the "hideous irony", in the circumstances, of patriotic songs, but the savage debunking of the singers is unmistakable in these lines:

But even skulls have their humour,
 An eyeless and sardonic mockery:
 And we,
 Sitting with streaming eyes in the acrid smoke,
 That murks our foul, damp billet,
 Chant bitterly, with raucous voices
 As a choir of frogs ...

(39)

'Grotesque' reveals the final stage in Manning's disenchantment with the romantic heroic view of war, but, even in 1917, it was far from being his whole statement on the war. For the sake of clarity and convenience, the poems which trace Manning's growing realization of the horrors of war and his disillusionment with the high-flown romantic notions of the soldier have been dealt with here as a group, but in the text they are interspersed with poems that give evidence of a continuing belief in the heroism of man and that reveal the first hesitant effort to discern it in behaviour which he would not previously have regarded as heroic.

The first of these poems, 'Autarchy', is a reaction against the collectivism of the modern army, which seeks to crush all individuality and reduce every man to the status of a cog in the war machine. It is thus a counter to the vision, which informs 'The Trenches' and 'Transport', of the troops being goaded to the slaughter. The poem begins with an assertion of the self, and takes the form of an argument for the uniqueness of the individual, which, in the circumstances, is manifest only in the private thoughts, hopes and dreams of each man. To illustrate the character of his own mental world, Manning takes two objects of adoration, God and England, which would seem to be the property of everybody, and affirms the uniqueness of his own conception:

... even this England which is mine
Whereof no man has seen the loveliness
As with mine eyes: and even too, my God
Whom none have known as I: for these I fight, ...
(40)

Evidently, Manning is using phrases common to emotional, patriotic poetry and propaganda of the time because he is asserting the very

antithesis of the unquestioning collective response at which such literature aims. Unfortunately, 'this England', 'my God', and 'for these I fight' are, in the context, too much the property of propaganda to work in the way which Manning intends, so the final effect is confusing. Nevertheless, uninspiring though this poem is as poetry, it is of the utmost significance, for it is the first clear recognition of the need to preserve one's identity against forces that seek strenuously to destroy it. It will be seen that this sense of the freedom of the self was to be developed into the existentialist conception of heroism which he expresses in The Middle Parts of Fortune.

Manning explores another heroic response to the exigencies of war in the poem 'Now'. As the title suggests, the emphasis is on the present moment - there being no certainty of anything else in war - and on the effect this produces on the men in the trenches. Manning felt that the continual awareness of the uncertainty of life produced a remarkable flowering of the human spirit, because it removed from man the acquisitive urge that rules his peacetime existence:

I praise thee for the noble and prodigal virtues,
That are spendthrift of all,
Giving and taking with a light hand;
For this moment only is ours:
Of old ye were provident, and frugal,
With the parsimony of peace.
Now ye will jeopard your lives for a song,
For a mere breath, the shadow of a desire;
Cloaking your valour with a jest,
Veiling its holiness, ...

(41)

Unlike his earlier heroic celebrations, when Manning identified the troops with Christ and saw them as deliverers of the Western World, he makes no such exaggerated claims in this poem, but discerns

(41) Manning : op.cit. p.32

heroism in behaviour so unflamboyant and common that the troops themselves would not have considered it extraordinary. Yet the generosity which Manning commends here was extraordinary. It meant an unstinting giving of oneself and one's meagre goods in circumstances that militated against such conduct. The one instance that Manning gives here is generosity of the highest degree, for it is the hiding of fear, with chivalric insouciance, for the sake of one's fellows. That he held this behaviour to be heroic is emphasized by the last two lines of the passage above, lines that recall David Jones's very similar tribute to the heroism of the medical officer who made the lives of the troops bearable by "glossing his ... discourses with every lewdness, whose heroism and humanity reached toward sanctity." (42)

It becomes clear from Manning's expansion of the theme of this passage that he saw in their attitude to life chivalry like that of Sir Philip Sidney, for he depicts it in courtly images drawn from gaming and hawking:

Ye play with life as with a gamester,
Full of doubles and shifts,
And ye laugh at each turn of the game,
Your hearts hawking at a chance
With a keen-edged zest.

(43)

The enormous attraction that the heroic spirit continued to hold for Manning is very evident in these lines, and indeed in the whole poem. It is clear that his admiration of the splendid disregard of death and the liberality of the heroic nature shown by Brunhild and Helgi had not been eradicated by the intervening years, nor by the horrors of mechanized warfare, for he can still discern these qualities in men acting in very different circumstances. But, equally, there is no

(42) Manning : op.cit. p.33

(43) *ibid.*

denying the veracity of his despairing vision of the war epitomized by the faces of the men whom he describes in 'The Trenches': "Sad, pitiless, terrible faces/ Each an incarnate curse."

The fact that Manning *juxtaposes* in the text poems which contain such contrasting views of the war indicates that he sensed that in order to be truthful the poet had to comprehend both views. In 1917, an all-inclusive work that would accommodate such disparate parts was beyond him, because he had neither the leisure for such sustained writing nor the scope as a poet; but it is clear that eleven years before he wrote his epic work of the war he had defined its essential character.

Manning's war poetry has been reviewed in this chapter more for what it contributes to the reader's understanding of The Middle Parts of Fortune than for its intrinsic merit. However, it has been seen that occasionally he achieves, in a line or two, an impressive dramatic power. But these are isolated moments, and although he had an overall competency as a poet, this study has revealed that Manning had not the sustained strength nor the style to produce a great poem. He could not have written a 'Dead Man's Dump', despite the fact that his response to the war has much in common with that of Rosenberg.

Something of these similarities has been pointed out in the text, but since a comparison of the development of his heroic vision with that of Rosenberg highlights its potential strength, it is useful to conclude this chapter with such a comparison. It will be recalled that their earlier fascination with the heroic spirit as they encountered it in literature and religion led Rosenberg and Manning to go out to the trenches with a predilection to view the war and the

soldier heroically. They both responded to the war itself with creative excitement, and, like the heroic poets of the past, captured its huge destructive energy in apocalyptic or mythic images. The corresponding heroic portrayal of the modern soldier presented far more difficulties, as Rosenberg realized at once. His solution was to avoid all features of the modern infantryman that were alien to the warrior image, and thus to concentrate on the magnificent strength and pride of their bodies, seeing in their "strong eyes" a heroic defiance of the forces of war. The image is authentic, and is deeply stirring, but it has a static, pictorial quality, because one realizes that Rosenberg cannot venture beyond it. Like those he depicts killed by machine-gun fire and high explosives in 'Dead Man's Dump', his soldiers are eternally "In the strength of their strength/ Suspended - stopped and held." Ironically, because he was initially less perceptive than Rosenberg of the inadequacy of the romantic heroic myth to portray the soldier truthfully, Manning went through a period of disillusionment that led, ultimately, to a heroic vision that was more completely in touch with the reality of the modern infantryman than Rosenberg's "haughty athletes".

CHAPTER 8

Frederic Manning : Part Two

War is waged by men; not by beasts, or by gods. It is a peculiarly human activity. To call it a crime against mankind is to miss at least half its significance; it is also the punishment of a crime. That raises a moral question, the kind of problem with which the present age is disinclined to deal.

(1)

More than anything else it is Manning's recognition of the tragic nature of man's predicament in war that distinguishes The Middle Parts of Fortune from the other war books that were published in the decades after the Great War. As the above extract from the Author's Preface reveals, he saw with clarity that the causes of war lie within the dark recesses of the soul of every man, so that there could, in truth, be no exonerating the troops in the trenches from the blame of the war, as many poets and writers had sought to do. He saw, too, that the violence and passion of man became in the totality a force so impersonal and vast that it goes beyond any human control or understanding and can, at best, only be *endured*. Yet Manning saw that, paradoxically, it is from out of this situation, which has arisen from the aggression of his own nature, that man can reveal himself at his finest and most noble.

The novel is thus a revelation of the tragic vision in its classical form, that only Manning, with his classical background, his sure sense of style and structure, and most of all his strong Christian belief which enabled him to see a nobility and heroism in man, could have written.

(1) Frederic Manning : The Middle Parts of Fortune (Peter Davies, London 1977) p.viii; first published 1929 (Limited Edition)

Even in the bowdlerized form* in which Manning was forced by the public's squeamishness over 'four-letter words' to publish his novel, it received universal acclaim from the critics and from writers of such distinction as Arnold Bennett, T E Lawrence, Ernest Hemingway and E M Forster. Manning, hiding behind the anonymity of his army number, was characteristically reticent about this avalanche of praise, although he did intimate to Lawrence, who had guessed the authorship, that he was relieved that Arnold Bennett had realized that the book was "a tribute to the men"(2). This emphasis on 'tribute' should be noted, because it is the constant endeavour of the novelist. There is no character development, no passage from ignorance to knowledge; at the beginning of the book, the men, emerging from the ordeal of an attack, are as aware that they are trapped and doomed as they are shown to be at the end. They know full well what it costs in terms of courage and the affirmation of their own will merely not to 'break' in such a situation, as the following passage from the opening pages very clearly reveals. Clinton, an officer, speaks to Bourne immediately after the attack:

'Come on,' he said, making for the steps, 'you and I are two of the lucky ones, Bourne; we've come through without a scratch; and if our luck holds we'll keep moving out of one bloody misery into another, until we break, see, until we break.'

Bourne felt a kind of suffocation in his throat: there was nothing weak or complaining in Mr Clinton's voice, it was full of angry soreness. He switched off the light as he came to the Wilson canvas.

'Don't talk so bloody wet,' Bourne said to him through the darkness. 'You'll never break.'

(3)

* The Middle Parts of Fortune was published anonymously, in its bowdlerized form, in 1929 as Her Privates We. Only 520 numbered copies of The Middle Parts of Fortune were printed.

(2) A W Lawrence (ed.) : Letters to T E Lawrence (n.p. 1962)

(3) Frederic Manning : The Middle Parts of Fortune p.4

Manning's tribute is to the fact that, despite the enormity of their trial, they did not break.

It will become obvious that there is a very close relationship between Manning and the main character of his novel, the complex and intellectual Bourne. Like Manning, he is sophisticated, highly educated, and an Australian, standing apart from his fellow infantrymen, yet accepted by them as one of their group. However, the novel is very far from being a mere transcript of Manning's experience in the King's Shropshire Light Infantry Regiment. It reveals a conscious and very selective use of his material in accordance with a dictum for narrative novels that he stressed in a letter to T E Lawrence: "A narrative should always tend towards the dramatic." Consequently, although Manning as much as David Jones reveals how ordinary most of the experience of the front-line troops was, he, like Jones, never allows the reader to forget that lurking in the background of every soldier's mind was the knowledge that, sooner or later, he would be called upon to leave the comparative safety of the trenches and 'go over the top', either in open attack or in a raid on enemy lines. Manning does this partly by the way in which he structures the novel, dividing it into three phases that either deal directly with battle or point towards it, and partly by his restricting the action to a few months of the experience of one battalion on the Somme. Restricting the range in this way enables him to explore intensively the behaviour and relationships of Bourne and his group, so that the reader is drawn imaginatively into their world and believes completely in their reality.

The first phase begins with the aftermath of a successful assault on the German front line by the battalion, and examines the

physical and psychological effects of battle. The opening pages depict in a vivid, factual style the physical reaction of Bourne and an assorted group of soldiers to the battle which they have just survived. Manning reveals that immediately after such an experience their consciousness is wholly dominated by the body's physical needs for water, cigarettes, and sleep. The more complex psychological effects are conveyed subtly but evocatively by concentrating on the involuntary reactions of the sleeping soldiers, and by the sleepless Bourne's response to them and by his re-creation from memory of his experiences that day. In using the device of memory and re-enactment in nightmare to show what the men have been through, Manning greatly emphasizes the terrors of attack and the frailty of the human psyche. From lines such as the following, one realizes the enormity of the strain and the terrible effort of will involved in taking part in an attack:

The obscure disquiet passed fitfully from one to another, lips parted with the sound of a bubble bursting, teeth met grinding as the jaws worked, there were little whimperings which quickened into sobs, passed into long shuddering moans, or culminated in angry, half-articulate obscenities, and then relapsed, with fretful, uneasy movements and heavy breathing, into a more profound sleep.

(4)

The second phase covers the period of rest and refitment that the exhausted and depleted battalion undergoes after it has been pulled back from the trenches. Dramatically, it affords Manning the opportunity of decreasing the tension of the opening assault and of a more leisurely exploration of the characters of the men, their relationships with each other, and their attitudes to war.

(4) Frederic Manning : The Middle Parts of Fortune p.6

With the return of the battalion to the front line, albeit to a quiet section of it, comes the knowledge that soon the men must face again the terrors of another assault. The feeling of foreboding this produces is deliberately increased by the description of a number of incidents that foreshadow the coming catastrophe. Most are traceable to the incompetence and ignorance of Headquarters, as will be the failure of the final attack. The first such incident is the needless loss of the lives of seven men, brought about by a general's order that the battalion must parade in a town square, an order issued merely because he felt that the salute of the men he passed in his car was lacking in military smartness. The fact that such a parade made the troops easy targets for enemy fire is overlooked by the general, and it seems, moreover, that the High Command stubbornly refuses to learn, for, later in the novel, a whole platoon of a Scottish regiment is obliterated because they are ordered to parade, in an even more dangerous place, to collect their rations. Another incident, the rehearsal of the battalion for the attack on the village of Serre, borders on farce because, apart from the fact that the general and his staff are completely out of touch with the actuality of the situation, the manoeuvre is halted by an irate French peasant who refuses to allow the troops to march over her clover field. The humour of this débacle only underlines the grim fact that soon the troops are to translate this ill-conceived, impractical plan into a reality, and in place of a stream of French invective, will face the barrage of the formidable German defences of Serre.

This rehearsal begins the long prelude to the attack - a period in which Manning charts the variations in reaction of the troops to the ordeal, both as a group and as individuals, right up to zero hour. The attack itself, which kills Martlow, wounds Shem, and

thus brings about the disintegration of Bourne's group, is the climax to the novel; but, in accordance with the overall tragic pattern, there is a dénouement that removes all hope that Bourne will escape the fate of Martlow.

The effect of this dramatic structure, with its underlying but constant emphasis on ordeal, is to bring to the fore the whole question of heroism in the special circumstances of the Western Front. Manning, as it was stressed earlier in this chapter, saw his novel primarily as "a tribute to the men"; but a reading of even the first few pages makes clear that he intends a much more profound examination and explanation of heroism than this remark to T E Lawrence might at first suggest. It will be seen throughout the novel that, in revealing the nature of the men's heroism, Manning shows as much what heroism is *not* as what it *is*.

It has been pointed out that Manning saw that heroism lay very largely in the superhuman effort of will required in 'not breaking' in conditions of war more appalling than anybody had ever envisaged. Most of these conditions are familiar enough to the modern reader, at least by description: the terrors of enduring bombardment and of advancing over broken, open ground while under heavy machine-gun fire; the ever-present reminders of death in the form of bleak, ruined landscapes and festering, fly-corrupted bodies; the miseries of waterlogged, rat-infested trenches; the lice; and the apparent endlessness of stagnant warfare. However, early in the novel, Manning demonstrates in an interesting passage that he believed that a peculiar hardship of modern warfare was that the soldier no longer had the compensations that had bolstered soldiers of the past - compensations such as the inspirational force of the hero, and the

excitement of action evident, for instance, in this extract from The Iliad describing Hector's storming the Achaean wall: "Glorious Hector leapt inside, with a look like nightfall on his face. He held two spears in his hand and the bronze on his body shone with baleful light. None but a god could have met and held him as he sprang through the gate." (5) Manning's description of troops advancing is in starkly contrasting terms:

He [Bourne] closed his eyes and had a vision of men advancing under a rain of shells. They had seemed so toy-like, so trivial and ineffective when opposed to that overwhelming wrath, and yet they had moved forward mechanically as though they were hypnotized or fascinated by some superior will. That had been one of Bourne's most vivid impressions in action, a man close to him moving forward with the jerky motion a clockwork toy has when it is running down; and it had been vivid to him because of the relief with which he had turned to it and away from the tumult and confusion of his own mind. It had seemed impossible to relate that petty, commonplace, unheroic figure, in ill-fitting khaki and a helmet like the barber's basin with which Don Quixote made shift on his adventures, to the moral and spiritual conflict, almost superhuman in its agony, within him.

(6)

This view of modern soldiers in battle does not mean that Manning did not believe that a Hector-like hero could not be found in the context of the First World War. He has, in the form of Captain Malet, a warrior who fulfils all the Greek ideals of remarkable physical presence and prowess, charismatic force, independent action, and great courage. Although he would have regarded going into battle blowing a hunting horn or dribbling a football as "sentimental levity", he has an insouciant, daring streak that overawes his men - a daring that reveals itself in his climbing out of the trench just before an attack and walking along the parapet, "less as though he were

(5) Homer : The Iliad trans. E V Rieu (Harmondsworth, England 1966)
p.233

(6) Frederic Manning : The Middle Parts of Fortune p.10

encouraging the men than as though taunting them" (7), and in his returning to the enemy trenches after the attack, without bravado, in order to retrieve his ash stick. In his expression, manner, and in the way he moves and speaks, there is a sense of an "insubordinate and destructive energy that only an enormous effort enabled him to bridle." In battle, this energy breaks loose, and he is fearless. When he leads them, he expects his men to expend themselves to the full, and they do, even the sophisticated Bourne finding himself driven forward by the "grim bulk of Captain Malet and his strangely exultant face." It is clear, however, that the virtue that Manning most values is Malet's concern for his men - a virtue not conspicuous in the Classical heroes. Malet is revealed to be quite as single-minded in the defence and care of his company as he is in attacking the enemy lines. This is shown several times, including the occasion on which he manages, after considerable effort, to save a deserter from being sent before a firing-squad; but his finest moment is when he discovers that, owing to an orderly-room error, the company cooks are ordered by Brigade to be sent up the line with a working party. The adjutant, nervous of contravening an order from on high, refuses to change it.

Then Captain Malet arrived on the scene, quite ready to fight anything and principle be damned.

'Do you intend, sir, to take my cooks?'

The adjutant saw no other way.

'I am not going to allow my men to suffer because of some damned incompetence in the orderly-room. Do you understand that if the cooks go up the line on this working-party, the men will not even have any hot tea when they come back, at about three in the morning, exhausted?'

The adjutant tried to assert himself, but the angry officer would not let him speak.

'You haven't got the moral courage to stand up for your own men, or to admit your silly blunder. Well, I shall tell you what I shall do. I shall order my horse, and take two orderlies and go up to inspect trenches. I shall see you are two men short anyway, and fuck Brigade!'

(7) Manning : op.cit. p.22

He brought his fist down on the table, turned on his heel without saluting and went out.

(8)

Yet despite the attraction which the traditional heroic personality has for Manning, very obvious in the above extract, it is clear that he felt that such a personality could be of only limited value in the situation in which all men fighting in the trenches found themselves. Thus it is that Malet does not dominate the novel, as he so easily might have done, and that, just before the second attack, Manning removes him from the action and from the novel by having a beam fall on him and break both his legs when his dugout is blown up by an enemy shell. It is significant that he is hardly mentioned again, even at moments when this would seem natural, such as when one of the subalterns, Marsden, is promoted to his position, or when the company again goes into action. Moreover, if the other officers have not his charisma, they are shown to be as effective and as efficient as Malet is. The point that Manning is making would appear to be that, given a reasonable degree of competency, it made little real difference to the men *who* led them, for what was at issue for them could be significantly affected neither by prowess nor by inspirational force. Indeed, according to the different scale by which Manning rates heroism, Malet is more the hero when he makes the lot of his men more endurable by ensuring that they get their tea than when he is defying the German snipers from the parapet of the British trench. This particular heroic role, however, is not one that he, as an officer, can readily fulfil.

On the whole, the men regard the officers as fairly distant beings. They appreciate that, officer and private alike, "they are all

in it together" and that they are fortunate in having officers who usually come up to their expectations of fairness, authority, and leadership; but there is no intimacy between them, and it is the N.C.O.s who provide the guidance and strength to get the men through the day-to-day crises of their lives. Of these, it is the strict and kindly Corporal (later Sergeant) Tozer who is the most influential. It is he who notices the anguish of Pritchard and Bourne when their chums are killed, and skilfully and humanely turns their attention away from the subject of their grief. It is Tozer who holds the platoon together in battle, and who makes Bourne get control of himself when he is mad with rage at Martlow's death; and, finally, it is he who compassionately understands poor Weeper's heroic and futile action in bringing back Bourne's body from the enemy wire.

'A've brought 'im back,' he cried desperately, and collapsed with the body on the duck-boards. Picking himself up again, he told his story incoherently, mixed with raving curses.

'What are you gibbering about?' said Sergeant Morgan. 'aven't you ever seen a dead man before?'

Sergeant-Major Tozer, who was standing outside the dug-out, looked at Morgan with a dangerous eye. Then he put a hand on Weeper's shoulder.

'Go down an' get some 'ot tea and rum, ol' man. That'll do you good. I'd like to have a talk with you when you're feelin' better.'

(9)

Manning's treatment of his central character further reveals the attraction that the heroic type in its various forms held for him, for Bourne is presented, also, as a conventional hero. He has a graceful address that charms the French women he encounters; he has an extraordinary capacity for drink, so much so that, after drinking a whole bottle of rum, he gets a near perfect score for target shooting; he protests to Captain Malet that he has had no experience in the handling of men, but, when the situation calls for it, he takes charge

with admirable decisiveness; and he has an Odysseus-like cunning which enables him to procure good food, wine, tea, and hot water whenever he pleases, much to the envy of his companions. " 'e 'as some bloody 'ide, pinchin' the commandin' officer's bucket" is Tozer's comment as he watches Bourne idly swinging the Colonel's bucket on the morning after the first attack, while the rest of the men put up with a complete lack of washing facilities.

From the reader's point of view, Bourne is also the hero since he is seen to be more sensitive, perceptive and articulate than his fellows, and because it is largely through him that the experience which the novel delineates is expressed and interpreted. This heroic rôle is further enhanced by the fact that his reflections and responses merge most of the time with those of the omniscient narrator. For instance, one attributes to Bourne the whole clever and amusing deflation of the General and his Staff's attendance at the rehearsal for the attack on Serre, while, in fact, Bourne's contribution is confined to a single derogatory remark on the horsemanship of one of the "great men" who "cantered importantly by."

Yet, despite Bourne's status in the novel and his numerous heroic attributes, he does not really emerge as the hero. This is because Manning draws a distinction between the popular conception of heroism, which Malet and Bourne both illustrate in their different ways, and the heroism which he is celebrating in this novel. Of this heroism - the display of courage, integrity and humanity in extreme adversity - the aforementioned characters have no monopoly. Indeed, with a few definite exceptions, this heroic strain is exhibited by the whole company of Westshires, from the cheeky sixteen-year old Martlow to the nerve-racked subaltern, Mr Clinton.

Early in the novel, when Manning describes the dismissal of the exhausted troops after the battle, he begins to reveal the nature of this heroism. The strain that the men have undergone and still experience as they come down the communication trench is evident in their "drawn, pitiless faces" and in the fact that Captain Malet's words of command are "no more than whispers" and "not quite under control." Nevertheless, he stands erect with his ash stick under his arm, and his troops reflect his admirable discipline by marching to the camp in military order, and even making an attempt to dress ranks when they are halted. How gallant this effort is only becomes clear later on, when Bourne relives the nightmare of the attack. The comment of one of the camp tailors, as he watches the arrival of the remnants of the battalion, indicates a good deal: "'They can say what they bloody well like,' he said appreciatively, 'but we're a fuckin' fine mob.'"

The tailor's identification with the combat troops is endearing, particularly as it is, in fact, ironic, for, as Manning has pointed out, there is an unbridgeable gulf "between men just returned from action, and those who have not been in the show." It is a gulf, however, that has always lent the fighting man a heroic stature, and Manning shows that he is very much aware of this when he describes the troops the day after the battle:

There was something insolent even in the way they tightened their belts, hawked, and spat in the dust. They had been through it, and having been through it, they had lapsed a little lower than savages, into the mere brute. Life for them held nothing new in the matter of humiliation. Men of the new drafts wondered foolishly at their haggard and filthy appearance. Even the details kept a little aloof from them, as from men with whom it might be dangerous to meddle, and perhaps there was something in their sad, pitiless faces to evoke in others a kind of primitive awe. They for their part went silently about the camp, carrying themselves, in their stained and tattered uniforms, with scornful indifference.

It is evident from this passage that Manning believes that the experience of battle in the trench warfare of 1917 was so devastating to the human psyche that merely to go through such an ordeal and not to break under its terrible pressures was heroism. This is conveyed subtly by the language, which takes on a tragic intensity as attention is turned from the survivors' gestures of bravado to their faces. The image of "the sad pitiless faces" and the response of primitive awe in those who did not participate is deeply impressive, implying, as it does, that these haggard, filthy men have gone far beyond the usual confines of experience into a new and fearful world.

How fearful this world is, and thus how great is the effort of will required to go forward into it, is hinted at here by the disclosure that the men have deliberately to subject themselves to the ultimate humiliation of civilized man - that of being degraded to the level of a brute. One has learnt something of what this means in the preceding pages of the novel, where Manning describes Bourne's vivid recollection of the terrors of the attack as he lies sleepless some hours later: "... men smashed, obliterated in sudden eruptions of earth, rent and strewn in bloody fragments ... and then a face suddenly, an inconceivably distorted face, which raved and sobbed at him as he fell with it into a shell-hole." Some measure of the horror of this madness and chaos is the men's appalled realization that their chances of dying a clean death from a bullet are about as slender as their chances of survival. Deep within themselves they are haunted by the possibility of their being shattered and eviscerated, and each man desperately attempts to deny that it could happen to him.

(10) Manning : op.cit. p.12

And one sees such things; and one suffers vicariously, with the inalienable sympathy of man for man. One forgets quickly. The mind is averted as well as the eyes. It reassures itself after that first despairing cry: 'It is I!'

'No, it is not I. I shall not be like that.'

And one moves on, leaving the mauled and and bloody thing behind: gambling, in fact, on that implicit assurance each one of us has of his own immortality. One forgets, but he will remember again later, if only in his sleep.

(11)

It is significant that, even when Manning shows the hideous face of war, as he does in these passages, he does so without any sense of the anger and protest that are characteristic of much of the literature of the First World War. His purpose in describing the terror of the experience so graphically appears to be to reveal the enormity of the test of courage.

It is a test of which the soldiers are almost constantly aware, even when they are out of the front line, as their pre-occupation with becoming 'windy' indicates. 'Windy', in its extreme form, is a complete giving way to fear, bringing about a collapse of the moral and spiritual standards they try desperately to maintain. This is why they regard the deserter, Miller, with a horrified revulsion; because he has done what each man knows he could very easily do himself. "It might be I, one felt involuntarily, and the thought made one almost merciless towards the man who carried with him the contagion of fear." One realizes that it is to try to rid himself of the fear of becoming like Miller that Bourne anxiously seeks reassurance from Sergeant Tozer that he is not 'windy', and then tries to prove this to himself by deliberately exposing himself to enemy shell fire when he, Shem and Martlow are sent to take over a

relay post. What he is doing is not lost on the perceptive Shem:

"Bourne's getting windy," said Shem to Martlow.

' 'e weren't windy goin' out in that lot,' said Martlow, repelling the suggestion.

'Yes, he was,' said Shem, chuckling; 'that's just why he went.'

If it comes to that, we're all windy,' grunted Martlow, loyally.

(12)

Martlow is right - they are all afraid of what they must face, and one realizes that their heroism lies not in the traditional heroic value of fearlessness, but in the struggle which they have in order to overcome their fear. This is eloquently expressed by Manning later in the novel, when he reveals the tragic universality of Bourne's determination not to break:

It was the unknown which they had challenged; and when the searching flames took hold of their very flesh, the test was whether or not they should flinch under them. The men knew it. We can stick it, they said; and they had to retrieve their own failures, to subdue their own doubts, to master their own pitiful human weaknesses, only too conscious for the most part, even when they broke into complaints, that the struggle with their own nature was always inconclusive.

(13)

The stark words: "We can stick it" are taken up again as a poignant refrain when the men reach out to comfort one another as they stand in battle order waiting for zero hour.

However, if "we can stick it" would seem to imply that the agony is shared, Manning makes clear that, ultimately, each man must face the ordeal on his own. This realization comes on Bourne, Shem and Martlow in the very instant that they make the pact that fighting men through the centuries have made before battle:

'We three had better try and keep together,' said Shem evenly.

'Yes,' answered the other two, as though they engaged themselves quietly.

And then, one by one, they realized that each must go alone, and that each of them already was alone with himself, helping the others perhaps, but looking at them with strange eyes, while the world became unreal and empty, and they moved in a mystery, where no help was.

(14)

The tragic profundity of the last paragraph of this passage, with its emphasis on the loneliness of each man in the moment of crisis, seems to make their courage appear very much harder than the collective courage that poets once celebrated, even bearing in mind Tennyson's poetic diction: "'Forward, the Light Brigade!'/ Was there a man dismayed?" Manning himself does not make this distinction: indeed, the Shakespearean epigraphs to each chapter suggest rather that he was urging a continuity of the experience of man in war through the centuries. However, the floundering, terrible struggle through mud across no-man's-land that he describes so graphically in the following pages makes one realize that the First World War troops were commonly called upon to make an effort of will and to display a stoic courage to a degree hitherto unknown in more mobile warfare. This was primarily because the troops had to attack in conditions that were usually very much more dangerous and difficult than those experienced in previous wars. For instance, the barrages of high explosive that prefaced the infantry's attacks seem rarely to have succeeded in their objective of knocking out the enemy's front line, so the attacking troops were almost invariably exposed to the full force of the enemy's artillery the moment that they climbed out of the trenches. Bourne's feeling then "that every bloody gun in the German army was pointed at him" is not as far from the truth as one might at first imagine. Nor, too, is his agonized impression of the painfully slow progress of

(14) Manning : op.cit. pp.209-10

their advance towards the enemy lines. The violently churned-up, muddy terrain which was no-man's-land precluded all possibility of charging the enemy.

One does not have to read far into military literature to realize the immense psychological advantages of the charge. For instance, Homer's description of Hector storming the Achaean wall (see above), or, in a closer comparison, the account by a young private soldier, Rifleman Harris of the 95th Regiment of Foot, of the charge at Vimiero in 1805, well illustrates the mounting excitement and sheer physical exhilaration of rushing forward in the company of a large body of men, as well as the feeling of invincibility that such unity brings:

... the men cried out (as it were with one voice) to charge. 'D--n them!' they roared, 'charge! charge!' General Fane, however, restrained their impetuosity. He desired them to stand fast and keep their ground. ...

The next minute he gave the word to charge, and down came the whole line, through a tremendous fire of cannon and musketry - and dreadful was the slaughter as they rushed onwards. As they came up with us, we sprang to our feet, gave one hearty cheer, and charged along with them, treading over our own dead and wounded, who lay in the front. The 50th were next us as we went, and I recollect, as I said, the firmness of that regiment in the charge. They appeared like a wall of iron. The enemy turned and fled, the cavalry dashing upon them as they went off.

(15)

The contrast between this passage and Manning's description of the Westshires stumbling slowly forward into "an overwhelming wrath", keeping their companions in sight as best they could, emphasizes the terrible strains peculiar to trench warfare. Yet, as well as finding heroism in not breaking in such seemingly unbearable

(15) Captain Curling ed. : The Recollections of Rifleman Harris (London 1948) quoted in General Sir John Hackett: The Profession of Arms (Sidgwick and Jackson, London 1948) pp.88-90

circumstances, it is evident that Manning believed that it is in battle that man undergoes a mystic and ecstatic fulfilment of his soul that is unlike anything else in his experience. He expresses this moment of fulfilment in a chivalric/romantic metaphor. His inclusion of the image: "Even in the actual ecstasy of battle, when a man's soul might be torn suddenly from its scabbard to flash in an instant's brightness" recalls his very similar employment of it in his early war poem, 'The Choosers': "I am torn from the scabbard: Lo, one/ To be a sword upon my thigh." The Pre-Raphaelite beauty of the language of this image and the idea which it expresses are so alien to modern thinking about war that this aspect of Manning's vision has been ignored by his critics*. However, it will be recalled from his early heroic portraits and from his war poem, 'Now', that he was deeply stirred by the passionate prodigality of the heroic spirit. Thus, just as he sees that Brunhild's supreme moment is when she risks her reputation and her life to prove her love, so he sees that Bourne's "instant of brightness" is when he has actually abandoned himself to the fight, taking, without any holding back, the chance of death and mutilation, and this in the full knowledge that men all around him had broken and run:

Bourne, floundering in the viscous mud, was at once the most abject and the most exalted of God's creatures. The effort and rage in him, the sense that others had left them to it, made him pant and sob, but there was some strange intoxication of joy in it, and again all his mind seemed focused into one hard bright point of action. The extremities of pain and pleasure had met and coincided too.

(16)

* Except T E Lawrence, who expressed man's heroism in battle in similar terms in The Seven Pillars of Wisdom; but, unfortunately, his recorded criticism of The Middle Parts of Fortune is confined to a few perceptive comments.

The disclosure, at this juncture, that men did break and run during battle is important, not only because it redounds to Bourne's heroic effort, but because it makes clear a point which Manning emphasizes throughout the novel and which is the basis of his belief in heroism - that even in the apparently circumscribed situation of battle there is the possibility of an existential act of choice. In the passage above, then, Bourne arouses our admiration rather than our pity, because, following the dictates of his moral conscience and asserting the freedom of his being, he clearly has made such a choice. Equally, at the end of his life, our anger and pity at the cruel trick which fate plays on him just as he thinks himself safe co-exist with admiration and acceptance. This is because it is evident that Bourne had not been manipulated, as Tozer thinks, but had made up his own mind to go:

'No, thanks, Sergeant-Major,' said Bourne; 'but keep my ration for when I get back. And don't worry about me. I'm all right. I want to go.'

He knew that he did, then, very definitely. It was a part of his road, to whatever place it might lead ...

(17)

Admirable though Bourne's assertion of his personal identity and will is in such circumstances, the act of heroism that most moves us in this novel is Weeper Smart's insistence that he will accompany Bourne on the raid. It has been emphasized that nobody has a greater dread and loathing of war than Weeper, yet, because he has come to regard Bourne as a comrade and is angered at the way Marsden got him to volunteer, he makes a considered decision of extraordinary unselfishness:

There was silence for a couple of seconds; and suddenly Weeper stood up, the telephone receiver still on his head, and his eyes almost starting from their sockets.

'If tha go'st, a'm goin',' he said, solemnly.

Captain Marsden looked at him with a supercilious amazement.

(18)

The ridiculous, ungainly figure that Bourne's champion cuts, with his lean, clumsy body, the telephone receiver still on his head, protruding eyes, and the solemnity of his pronouncement is deliberately contrived by Manning, partly because his very ridiculousness adds to the poignancy of the moment, and partly because Weeper Smart illustrates the point made throughout the novel, that heroism in that war was not confined to men who fulfilled the conventional idea of the hero. Nevertheless, from this moment onwards, the very qualities that made him an object of ridicule and pity are subtly transformed so that in the time of crisis he appears very much a hero. This change in him is evident in his reply to Bourne's question of why he volunteered:

'When a seed that fuckin' slave-driver look at 'ee, a said to mysen, A'm comin'. ... A'm comin'. 't won't be the first bloody raid a've been out on, lad. An' 't won't be t' last. Th'ast no cause to worry. A can look after mysen, aye, an' thee too, lad. You leave it to me.'

(19)

One is struck in this speech by Weeper's fierce protection of Bourne against bullying authority and against the terrors of the raid. The decision and calm confidence of his words leave no doubt at all that he can do what he says. Suddenly, his lumbering strength, which seemed so misplaced in the narrow confines of a tent or even the trenches, appears right and proper to the moment. Likewise, his endless railing against the war and gloomy predictions of the company's fate, that both annoyed and amused the men, appear now in a different light. One feels that he makes the assurance: "Th'ast no cause to worry" out of a

clear and realistic knowledge of the situation.

Weeper's conduct in the raid confirms this impression, for he reveals himself a superb companion in such circumstances. He acts with the utmost decisiveness, helping Bourne to get to their assigned position near the enemy's machine-gun post speedily by pulling him out of a deep trench and hustling him down another. He matches Bourne's unerring aim when he throws a hand grenade which puts the machine-gun out of action, and he leads Bourne back to the gap in the wire. It is just when they are free of the wire and Bourne is feeling an incautious sense of elation that he is hit:

Something kicked him in the upper part of the chest, rending its way through him, and his agonized cry was scarcely audible in the rush of blood from his mouth, as he collapsed and fell.

Weeper turned his head over his shoulder, listened, stopped, and went back. He found Bourne trying to lift himself; and Bourne spoke, gasping, suffocating.

'Go on. I'm scuppered.'

'A'll not leave thee,' said Weeper.

He stooped and lifted the other in his huge, ungainly arms, carrying him tenderly as though he were a child. Bourne struggled wearily to speak, and the blood, filling his mouth, prevented him. Sometimes his head fell on Weeper's shoulder. At last, barely articulate, a few words came.

'I'm finished. Le' me in peace, for God's sake. You can't ...'

'A'll not leave thee,' said Weeper in an infuriate rage.

(20)

The terrible irony that Weeper's promise to look after Bourne is, in the end, transmuted to the carrying in of his corpse is at first overwhelming, but gradually one realizes that Weeper's action is not, as Sergeant Morgan regards it, a foolish, futile gesture. The gentleness with which Weeper lifts up the dying Bourne and carries

him is deeply moving, and seems, in that chaotic, violent world, an affirmation of humanity and love. This impression is strengthened by the fact that the passionate, twice-repeated avowal that Weeper makes to Bourne is an echo of Christ's promise to mankind: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"(21), and by the connection in the reader's mind between the "huge, ungainly arms" that enfold Bourne and the 'everlasting arms' of God referred to in the text which Bourne saw hanging in a Y M C A hut the night before the battle:

... he chanced to see over the door a red strip on which was printed in white letters: 'AND UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS'(22). It struck him with an extraordinary vividness, that bare text sprawling across the wall above the clamour of those excited voices; and once again he knew that feeling of certitude in a peace so profound, that all the turmoil of the earth was lost in it.

(23)

These allusions to Christ and the Almighty make clear that Manning wishes the reader to see Weeper's heroic act as an expression of the love and compassion of the Lord. Thus, in acting according to the dictates of his own moral code, he is undoubtedly a strange but worthy instrument of God. One recalls that he had expressed the essence of this code in a discussion the men had on a new order from GHQ that the troops were "strictly forbidden to stop for the purpose of assisting the wounded." Weeper is reprimanded by Corporal Hamley for his angry diatribe against the "bloody brass 'ats" , and he is reminded that "he has his orders":

(21) Hebrews XIII 5 ; also Matthew XXVIII 20

(22) Deuteronomy XXXIII 27

(23) Manning : op.cit. p.208

'A don't mind tellin' thee, corporal,' said Weeper, again lifting a large flat hand, as though by that gesture he stopped the mouths of all the world. 'A don't mind tellin' thee, that if a see a chum o' mine down, an' a can do ought to 'elp 'im, all the brass-'ats in the British Army, an' there's a bloody sight too many o' 'em, aren't goin' to stop me. A'll do what's right, an' if a know aught about thee, tha'll do as I do.'

(24)

Weeper's averment of loyalty to his fellows is part of an explicit exposition in the novel of the heroic code of the troops. It is clear from the very beginning, when Manning describes, through Bourne's visionary recollection, the advance of the Westshires into a devastating artillery barrage, that he is concerned to reveal not only the enormous effort of will exhibited by the men in such circumstances but also what lies behind this selfless behaviour, which runs contrary to all man's instincts for survival.

In the midst of battle, Bourne's and Clinton's consciousness of what it is that enables them to overcome "the moral and spiritual conflict, almost superhuman in its agony" within them is shown to be reduced to a single dictum: *One must not break*; but, later, the ramifications of this dictum are fully explained. This is done in various ways, but particularly by the struggling attempts of the men themselves to articulate their beliefs and the reasons why they are fighting, and by their response to an officer's inept attempts to communicate to them the accepted public-school idea of the heroic code. This officer, one of the subalterns, Mr Rhys, was imbued with the chivalric ideals of the code, and every now and then would try to inspire the men:

He was neither sufficiently imaginative, nor sufficiently flexible in character, to succeed. He would unpack a mind rich in a curious lumber of chivalrous commonplaces, and give an air of unreality to values which for him, and for them all in varying measure, had the strength, if not altogether the substance, of fact. They did not really pause to weigh the truth or falsity of his opinions, which were simply without meaning for them. They only reflected that gentlefolk lived in circumstances very different from their own, and could afford strange luxuries. Probably only one thing he said interested them; and that was a casual remark, to the effect that, if the bad weather continued, the attack might have to be abandoned. At that, the face of Weeper Smart became suddenly illumined by an ecstasy of hope.

(25)

This passage is an interesting one, not so much because it reveals how little meaning the public-school heroic code held for the ordinary troops - the trench poets have taught one to expect that - but because Manning makes clear that the troops did have their own coherent system of values. These values comprised essentially the same qualities of loyalty, commitment to duty, courage, and steadfastness celebrated in romantic heroic tradition, but when they were inflated to an unrealistic degree and expressed by Mr Rhys in language to which the men could not relate, it was not surprising that his remarks seemed alien to their experience and circumstances.

Something of the nature of their values becomes evident in the discussion which follows Mr Rhys's talk. A strong sense of duty and patriotism of a kind are displayed, for instance, in Glazier's simplistic view of their situation, and in Madeley's rejoinder:

'I'm not fightin' for them bloody slackers an' conchies at 'ome; but what I say is that the Fritzes 'ad to be stopped. If we 'adn't come in, an' they'd got the Frenchies beat, 'twould 'a' been our turn next.'

'Too bloody true it would,' said Madeley. 'An' I'd rather come an' fight Fritz in France than 'ave 'im come over to Blighty an' start bashin' our 'ouses about, same as 'e's done 'ere.'

(26)

It is Pacey, the married man "wi' two children an' a bit of religion in me still" who expresses the truth that, deep down, they all recognize and which has much to do with their stoic courage and acceptance of hardship: "'Some on us blame God for our own faults,' said Pacey, coolly, 'an' it were men what made the war. It's no manner o' use us sittin' 'ere pityin' ourselves, an' blamin' God for our own fault.'"(27)

Above all, however, they are ruled by their commitment to one another. Weeper's declaration that he will aid a wounded comrade in defiance of instructions well illustrates this loyalty to the group, and it is made clear that his words touch a chord within every man present. Even Corporal Hamley, after reprimanding Weeper for his disrespectful attitude, concludes: "'I'm not sayin' you're not right: I'd do what any other man'd do; but there's no need to make a song about it.'"

Hamley's correction of Weeper's outburst indicates that there was a sense of decorum that governed the troops' attitudes and behaviour. As 'don't make a song of it' suggests, they recoiled from any emotional heightening of their actions, particularly actions that could reasonably be regarded as heroic. This distaste for glorification was memorably voiced by Charles Hamilton Sorley when he censured Rupert Brooke for the self-consciously heroic stance taken in his war sonnets:

He is far too obsessed with his own sacrifice, regarding the going to war of himself (and others) as a highly intense, remarkable and sacrificial exploit, whereas it is merely the conduct demanded of him (and others) by the turn of circumstances ...

(28)

(27) Manning : op.cit. p.150

(28) Charles Hamilton Sorley : Letter, December 1915, quoted in Swann T B The Ungirt Runner : Charles Hamilton Sorley, Poet of World War I (Archon Books, London 1965) p.103

Sorley's words recall the quiet manner in which the 'regimental's' batman, Barton, determines that he must go over the top with the rest of the troops in the second attack. Unlike them, he did have a chance of avoiding the ordeal, but he chose not to exploit it.

'I didn't think you were going over the top with us, Barton,' he [Bourne] said, his surprise giving his words the turn of a question.

'The regimental didn't want me to go,' said Barton, blushing and smiling; 'e tried to work it so as I shouldn't go, but they wouldn't 'ave it.'

He was smiling, even as he blushed, in a deprecating way.

'I don't know what 'e wanted to bother for,' he said reasonably. 'It's only right I should go with the rest, and I'd as lief go as stay. You think o' things sometimes as seem to 'old you back; bit it's no worse for me than the nex' man. I think I'd rather go.'

(29)

The allegiance to his fellows and the sense of duty that Barton expresses here are deeply moving, all the more so because these age-old loyalties are expressed simply and with reticence. Moving too are the restrained comments that the troops make on the horrors that they have endured - comments that contrast sharply with the story that their desperately tired, strained faces and bodies tell - as illustrated in this passage:

Sometimes their eyes met a face, blank from the weariness that is indifference; and perhaps, because at this point they only moved forward a few yards at a time, they would exchange a few whispers.

'What's it like?'

'Oh, 'e strafed a bit this afternoon, but it's cushy enough.'

Bourne had never heard any other reply to that question, in all the hundreds of times he had heard it asked. A face of expressionless immobility, with hard inscrutable eyes, and that even, monotonous whisper:

'Oh, it's cushy enough.'

(30)

The decorum which the soldiers demonstrate in their avoidance of self-glorification extends to the manner in which they deal with death. As Manning reveals in their reaction to the death of Private Swale in the first attack, foul-mouthed and rough though these men might be, they are capable of delicacy as well as an intensity of feeling:

'... both 'is legs 'ad bin blown off, pore bugger; an' 'e were dyin' so quick you could see it. But 'e tried to stand up on 'is feet. " 'elp me up," 'e sez, " 'elp me up." - "You lie still, chum," I sez to 'im, "you'll be all right presently." An' 'e jes gives me one look, like 'e were puzzled, an' 'e died.'

Bourne felt all his muscles tighten. Tears were running down Pritchard's inflexible face, like rain-drops down a window-pane; but there was not a quaver in his voice, only that high unnatural note which a boy's has when it is breaking; and then for the first time Bourne noticed that Swale, Pritchard's bed-chum, was not there; he had not missed him before. He could only stare at Pritchard, while his own sight blurred in sympathy.

'Well, anyway,' said Martlow, desperately comforting ;
' 'e couldn't 'ave felt much, could 'e, if 'e said that?'

(31)

As well as revealing the nature of the men's values directly, Manning also does so indirectly, by making use of two characters whose thoughts and actions run counter to the code of the troops. The deserter, ex Lance-Corporal Miller, who is so repugnant to the men that they can hardly bring themselves to look at him when he is brought back, stands out most strikingly as the antithesis of their code. Paraded before the men to advertise his disgrace, he is, with his furtive, cunning eyes, weak mouth half open in a foolish grin, and bullet-shaped head, an object of disgust and pity; yet what angers them is not the fact that he is a coward, but that he has transgressed the sacred tenet of comradeship:

When Miller had disappeared just before the attack, many of the men said he must have gone over to the Hun lines and given himself up to the enemy. They were bitter and summary in their judgment on him. The fact that he had deserted his commanding-officer, which would be the phrase used to describe his offence on the charge-sheet, was nothing compared to the fact that he had deserted them. They were to go through it while he saved his skin. It was about as bad as it could be, and if one were to ask any man who had been through that spell of fighting what ought to be done in the case of Miller, there could only have been one answer. Shoot the bugger.

(32)

Nevertheless, this summary condemnation of the deserter is carefully qualified in the following paragraph, when Bourne distinguishes between Miller's avoidance of the whole ordeal and the case of the man who goes into battle, but breaks:

The interval between the actual cowardice of Miller, and the suppressed fear which even brave men felt before a battle, seemed rather a short one, at first sight; but after all, the others went into action; if they broke down under the test, at least they had tried, and one might have some sympathy for them; others broke momentarily and recovered again, like the two men whom Sergeant-Major Glasspool had brought to their senses. It might even be necessary to shoot fugitives for the sake of preventing panic. All these cases were in a different class, and might be considered with sympathy.

(33)

The second character is not mentioned by name, but he is of considerable interest because he demonstrates a variety of heroic behaviour that was whole-heartedly applauded by G.H.Q. and by the civilian population in England, and as thoroughly condemned by the majority of the combatant troops. He thus exemplifies the fact that the troops' understanding of heroic behaviour was very different from the official military and civilian understanding of it, which, in common with the old heroic code, placed high value on brilliant individual exploits, whatever the expenditure of men. In the following passage, Sergeant Morgan regards such heroic behaviour from the point

of view of the men, and thus throws into question the whole morality of the old type of heroic action:

'On'y one officer ever gave me any trouble, a chap attached to us, no names no pack-drill; but 'e were a bastard, 'e were. Military Cross, an' bar; reg'lar pot-'unter; an' we lost one o' the best corporals we've ever 'ad through that bloody man. Wouldn't be told, 'e wouldn't.'

(34)

It is significant that Sergeant Morgan is himself the company's raiding specialist and has just been trying to persuade Bourne of the excitement as well as the usefulness of exploring no-man's-land, because this highlights the fact that the men were quite prepared to risk their lives, provided that there was good reason for doing so, and provided that, as far as was possible, precautions were taken to minimize the loss of life. What they found reprehensible was the officer's callous disregard of their safety, which neglect, in its different way, also counts as an abrogation of the bonds of comradeship. So it is, then, that the reckless display of heroic prowess and the single-minded pursuit of honour - celebrated in such heroes as Hector, Achilles and Beowulf - are reduced, in the eyes of these twentieth-century troops, to "pot-hunting".

Sergeant Morgan's condemnatory assessment of an essential part of the old order of heroism provides an apt enough point at which to conclude this particular study of The Middle Parts of Fortune, because it supplies final confirmation of the great extent to which the understanding of heroism had altered, from what it had been in the past to what it had become in the troops of the First World War. It is a measure of Manning's skill as a novelist that he has been able to convince the reader that it was nobility which the troops

(34) Manning : op.cit. p.235

demonstrated in seemingly commonplace behaviour, such as maintaining order in the chaotic situation of battle, or in pushing one's own terrors aside enough to be able to comfort another man in the tense moments before going 'over the top'.

Yet Manning's achievement is, as has been suggested in this chapter, a far greater one than merely finding nobility and heroism in behaviour that would, in the past, have been regarded as neither noble nor heroic. The fact that his starting-point in the novel was his recognition of a corporate responsibility for war has given his vision dimensions altogether more profound and further-reaching than the vision of the trench poets, whose circumstances precluded a wider view. It was Yeats who first clearly understood how far from being tragic was the viewpoint of the poets whose whole consciousness was permeated by the belief that the blame for the war could be attributed to a callous government, incompetent Staff Officers and an ignorant civilian population. As he realized, the response of the trench poets could not move beyond the exposure of the suffering which they witnessed, and the expression of passionate anger and pity. This he found unacceptable in poetry, particularly in dealing with a subject which, he felt, called for a tragic response:

... passive suffering is not a theme for poetry. In all the great tragedies, tragedy is a joy to the man who dies; in Greece the tragic chorus danced. When a man has withdrawn into the quicksilver at the back of the mirror no great event becomes luminous in his mind; it is no longer possible to write *The Persians*, *Agincourt*, *Chevy Chase*; some blunderer has driven his car on to the wrong side of the road - that is all.

(35)

It seems certain that Yeats did not read The Middle Parts of Fortune.

(35) Yeats W B : Introduction to The Oxford Book of Modern Verse: 1892-1935 (Oxford University Press, London 1936) p.xxxiv

Had he done so, he surely would have commended it, for, if anything which emanated from the Great War triumphantly fulfils his demanding criteria for writing about war, it is this novel. Despite suffering the very hardships depicted by the trench poets, and despite the fact that their exercise of moral choice can operate only in restricted fields, Bourne and his companions, in common with the tragic heroes of the past, are *agents* who strive to maintain their integrity in circumstances of extraordinary difficulty.

.....

Of all the connections made in this dissertation among three such disparate writers as Rosenberg, Jones, and Manning there are two which, in conclusion, should be stressed, as they aid significantly the reader's understanding of the nature of their heroic vision. Despite the fact that these important denominators proceed from such different areas as army rank and religion, their effect is to clarify the same strengths and weaknesses in the perception of war of the three writers.

The most obvious link among them, but none the less important for that, is that they all served as privates on the Western Front. The advantage of being without the onerous responsibility of those writers who were also officers was considerable in that conflict, because it meant that they were without the moral imperative which impelled Owen, Sassoon, Graves, and others to use their artistic talent to protest, on behalf of the men whom they led, against the conduct of the war. One has to think only of Owen's letters to be

reminded how all-consuming and passionate was this sense of obligation. It largely precluded an objective vision of the war, and fixed the officer poets in a defined pattern of response. Whilst Rosenberg, Jones, and Manning certainly were sensitive to the anguish of war articulated by the officer poets, we have seen that this was but one element of the former writers' wider vision of the war, which, in the manner of the epics, comprehended "the strange and extraordinary new conditions" of life at the Front. Thus it was that experiences which necessarily lay outside the scope of the officers' poetry but were nevertheless a part of the daily lives of privates - sleeping on the deck of a troopship, the issue of rations, cleaning of equipment, delousing, drinking tea in the trenches - are, in addition to the moments more ostensibly dramatic, woven into the texture of the writing of Rosenberg, Jones, and Manning. Their vision is truly epic, also, in that it is grounded in a belief in man's ability to display traditional heroic virtues in the circumstances of trench warfare. Such an heroic apprehension of human behaviour gave meaning and definition to the conflict in which they were embroiled, which otherwise could only be seen as senseless and futile carnage on a vast scale. However, as has been seen, the degree to which they were able to translate their understanding of the heroic ethic into a modern context is a measure of their ultimate success in mastering their material. Despite the validity, breadth, and power of Rosenberg's war poetry, his fixed conception of the hero as a Judas Maccabeus figure led to his portrayal of the modern soldier being seriously inhibited. Likewise, Jones's problem in accommodating the later, technological stages of the war to his particular heroic vision must also be regarded as a grave limitation of his art. In the light of the difficulties of these two major poets, Manning's achievement appears very great. Not as bound as were they to a past heroic standard, he

was able, in terms at once more concrete and more profound, to comprehend the tragic dimension of the heroism of the troops. His classically tragic understanding of the dilemma of the troops is revealed in the recognition, which underlies the action of the whole novel, that the culpability for war lies within the nature of man, and also in the complementary belief proper to the tragic pattern, that man has the ability to strive nobly and courageously against the terrible rigours of the fate which he has brought upon himself. Rosenberg, of course, had this tragic insight, but it was Manning who gave it most memorable and authentic definition by revealing it in the idiom of the soldiers of the First World War. One recalls at this moment - because it sums up the whole heroic creed of these men so superbly - Bourne's reprimand of Clinton: " 'Don't talk so bloody wet', he said. 'You'll never break.' "

The other significant connection stressed in this study is that the heroic vision of the three writers to a considerable extent comes from their religious belief, and yet, paradoxically, in the case of Rosenberg and Jones it was this that inhibited the realization of the full potential of their vision. Rosenberg's unorthodox conception of God as a tyrannical deity against whom man splendidly rebels, combined with the fascination which the dynamic heroes of Hebraic tradition exerted over his mind, made it inevitable that his own perceptions of war would be heroic. Such a background enabled him to cope superbly with the magnitude and the devastating power of the war, but, as has been emphasized in the text and in the preceding paragraph, it also prevented him from finding heroism in qualities which were not part of the Hebraic heroic paradigm. The Christian theology of Jones's and Manning's backgrounds gave them far more of a predilection to discern heroic virtue in the unexpected, humble forms

in which it was demonstrated in the trenches. It will be recalled that the dual image of heroism and lowliness epitomised by Christ himself has been central to Christian faith from its inception, and thus, as Saint Paul for example makes evident, the recognition of the heroism of the common man has always been part of Christian endeavour and practice. Jones and Manning were, then, especially well equipped by the conditioning of their faith to find value in the behaviour of their comrades, and to view the whole conflict creatively and with an aesthetic detachment rather than to be overwhelmed by its horror. So it is that they were in their major works able to discover and make vivid new positives and beauty in war. The spiritual toughness of Manning which enabled him to convey in powerful tragic terms a terrible post-Somme period of the war may be attributed to the unorthodox nature and depth of his belief, which gave him direction in a seemingly disintegrating world. Such a belief highlights the circumscription of Jones's particular understanding of Dominican Catholicism, and the consequent effect of this on his writing, for, while not denying the originality and force of 'Balaam's Ass', it is primarily a register of an appalled reaction to the same period of the war which Manning was able to encompass with profound maturity and insight.

Finally, the limitations of Jones's and Rosenberg's perception notwithstanding, one leaves their poetry and Manning's novel with a sense of deep admiration. In seeking to celebrate the heroism of the men with whom they fought, they faced the great problem that the whole idiom and metaphor of heroic poetry had become stale and discredited. Rosenberg has the distinction of recognizing and fearlessly denouncing the banality of the existing heroic tradition and going on to attempt strenuously to realize his heroic

insights in magnificently original terms. As well as having no creditable tradition to follow, Jones and Manning had an equally difficult task in writing their main works after the war, when the anti-heroic had become the new established genre for the literature of war. To write then, against a background of stringent literary criticism of any writing which did not protest against war in the manner of Sassoon and Owen, and to produce, nevertheless, works as powerful and as sustained as In Parenthesis and The Middle Parts of Fortune is a grand testimony to the clarity and truth of their vision.

APPENDIX

It is most fortunate that definitive editions of the poetry and prose of Rosenberg, Jones and Manning have been published in the past ten years. These have been consulted in this dissertation. There follows a bibliographical history of their principal works, as well as a record of some unpublished works, with their whereabouts, as a preamble to the main bibliography.

Isaac Rosenberg

- 1937 The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg eds. D W Harding and G Bottomley (Chatto and Windus, London)

All of the material in the abovementioned work was corrected, augmented, and incorporated in:

- 1979 The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg: Poetry, Prose and Letters edited, with introduction and notes, by Ian Parsons (OUP New York)

David Jones

- 1937 In Parenthesis (Faber and Faber, London)
- 1961 as above, with a note of introduction by T S Eliot.
- 1978 as above, with some corrections to the text.
- 1974 David Jones: The Sleeping Lord and other Fragments (Faber and Faber, London)
This collection of poems contains the 'Passchendaele Fragment' from the unpublished Book of Balaam's Ass, which Jones described as "a collection of diverse fragments", written in the 1930s and 1940s and eventually abandoned altogether.

Unpublished material, by kind permission of Mrs Mollie Elkin, Tankerton, Kent, who is a niece and the Literary Executor of David Jones:

- 1917 'Somewhere on the Western Front'
- 1917 'A French Vision'

These works are housed at the National Library of Wales (1985 purchase).

Frederic Manning

- 1929 The Middle Parts of Fortune (Piazza Press, London), published anonymously in a limited two-volume edition of 520 copies.
- 1930 Expurgated version of the above published as Her Privates We by Private 19022.
- 1943 Reprint of the above carrying the author's name.
- 1977 The Middle Parts of Fortune with introduction by Michael Howard (Peter Davies, London). Third impression 1978.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Bibliography is arranged in the following way: first the works by Isaac Rosenberg, the first of the three writers discussed in the dissertation, then the main critical works dealing with that writer; similarly for the second and third writers, David Jones and Frederic Manning; lastly an alphabetical list of selected other works cited or consulted.

Main ReferencesIsaac Rosenberg

Rosenberg, Isaac The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg
ed. Ian Parsons (OUP New York 1979)

Cohen, Joseph : Journey to the Trenches: The Life of Isaac Rosenberg 1890-1918 (Robson Books, London 1975)

Harding D W : 'Aspects of the Poetry of Isaac Rosenberg' in *Scrutiny* v.3 1934-5

Liddiard, Jean : Isaac Rosenberg: The Half Used Life
(Gollancz, London 1975)

Wilson, Jean Moorcroft : Isaac Rosenberg: Poet and Painter
(Woolf, London 1975)

David Jones

Jones, David : In Parenthesis (Faber & Faber, London 1937,
this ed. 1978)

..... : The Anathemata (Faber and Faber, London 1952)

..... : Epoch and Artist ed. Harman Grisewood
(Faber and Faber, London 1959)

..... : The Sleeping Lord and other Fragments
(Faber and Faber, London 1975)

..... : The Dying Gaul (Faber & Faber, London 1978)

..... : Somewhere on the Western Front (National Library of Wales
David Jones paper 1985 purchase, Aberystwyth, Dyfed)

- Blissett, William : The Long Conversation: a Memoir of David Jones
(OUP, Oxford 1981)
- Hague, René (ed.) : Dai Greatcoat: a Self-Portrait of David Jones
in his Letters (Faber and Faber, London 1980)
- : A Commentary on the Anathemata of David Jones
(Christopher Skelton, Wellingborough 1977)
- Murray, Atholl : 'In Perspective: A Study of David Jones's
In Parenthesis in *Critical Quarterly* 16 1974
- Pacey, Philip : David Jones and other Wonder Voyagers
(Poetry Wales Press, Cardiff 1982)
- Rees, Samuel : David Jones (Twayne Publishers, Boston 1978)
- Ward, Elizabeth : David Jones Mythmaker (Manchester UP 1983)

Frederic Manning

- Manning, Frederic : The Middle Parts of Fortune
(Peter Davies, London 1978)
First published anonymously in 1929, in bowdlerized form,
as Her Privates We
- : Poems (John Murray, London 1910)
- : Poems (John Murray, London 1917)
- : 'The Poet as a Virtuoso' in *The Spectator*, 24 July 1915 p.115
- : Scenes and Portraits (John Murray, London 1907)
- : 'Some Winchester Letters' in *The Spectator*, 10 January 1920
- : The Vigil of Brunhild (London 1907)
- Haq, Kaiser : 'Forgotten Fred: A Portrait of Frederic Manning'
London Magazine, Dec 1983/Jan 1984

Selected Bibliography

- Aldington, Richard : Collected Poems (Allen & Unwin, London 1929)
- Amshewitz, J H : Lecture on Rosenberg, reported in 'The Zionist Record' 27 November 1937
- Andersen, R G : Isaac Rosenberg: A Critical Study of His Plays and Poems (Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester 1975)
- Anwyl E (trans.) : The Book of Aneirin in The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodion, 1903-4
- Attwater, Douglas : A Cell of Good Living: The Life, Works and Opinions of Eric Gill
- Banks T H (ed.) : The Poetical Works of John Denham (Yale UP, New Haven 1928)
- Barnett, Corelli : Britain and Her Army: A Political and Social Survey (OUP, London 1970)
- Basset S E (ed.) : The Poetry of Homer (Berkeley 1938)
- Bergonzi, Bernard : Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War (Constable, London 1965)
- Bertram, Anthony : Paul Nash: The Portrait of an Artist (Faber, London 1955)
- Boas F S (ed.) : The Poetical Works of Giles and Phineas Fletcher: 1582-1650 (CUP, Cambridge 1908)
- Boman, Thorlief : Hebrew Thought Compared to Greek (SCM Press, London 1960; first published in German in 1954)
- Bourne H R F : Sir Philip Sidney (n.p. New York 1891)
- Bowra C M : Heroic Poetry (Macmillan, London 1966)
- : From Virgil to Milton (Macmillan, London 1945)
- Brooke, Rupert : Complete Poems of Rupert Brooke (Sidgwick & Jackson, London 1932)
- Burton, Robert : The Anatomy of Melancholy v.1 ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan Smith (Tudor, New York 1948)
- Carnall, Geoffrey : Robert Southey and His Age: The Development of a Conservative Mind (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1960)
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor : The Complete Poetical and Dramatic Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge ed. J D Campbell (London 1893)
- : Coleridge's Poetical Works ed. E H Coleridge (Oxford 1969)

- Collins J C (ed.) : The Poems and Plays of Cyril Tourneur
(London n.p. 1878)
- Crosland, Jessie (trans.) : Raoul de Cambrai
(Chatto & Windus, London 1926)
- Cruse, Amy : The Victorians and Their Books
(Unwin Brothers, Woking 1935)
- Curling, Captain ed. : The Recollections of Rifleman Harris
(London 1948)
- Davidson, Mildred : The Poetry is in the Pity
(Chatto & Windus, London 1972)
- Dryden, John : Poetry, Prose and Plays of John Dryden Part 83
sel. Douglas Grant (Harvard UP, Cambridge, Mass. 1952)
- Edmonds, Charles : A Subaltern's War (Peter Davies, London 1929)
- Froissart, Jean : Froissart's Chronicles in Lord Berner's
Translation ed. William Anderson (Centaur Press, London)
- Fussell, Paul : The Great War and Modern Memory
(OUP New York 1975)
- Gardner B (ed.) : Up the Line to Death: The War Poets 1914-1918
(Methuen, London 1976)
- Girouard, Mark : The Return to Camelot (Yale UP, New Haven 1981)
- Gordon, George, Lord Byron : Don Juan ed. John Austen (London 1926
repr. 1930)
- Graham, Desmond : The Truth of War: Owen, Blunden and Rosenberg
(Carcanet Press, Manchester 1984)
- Graves, Richard Perceval : Robert Graves: The Assault Heroic 1895-1926
(George Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1986)
- Graves, Robert : Goodbye to All That: An Autobiography
(Jonathan Cape, London 1929)
- : The Crane Bag and other Disputed Subjects
(Cassell, London 1969)
- Gregson J M : The Poetry of the First World War,
Studies in English Literature ed. David Daiches
(Edward Arnold, London 1976)
- Grierson H J C (ed.) : Metaphysical Poets: Donne to Butler
(OUP, London 1926)
- Guest, Lady Charlotte : The Mabinogion (London 1877)
- Hackett, General Sir John : The Profession of Arms
(Sidgwick and Jackson, London 1948)
- Hale, John : 'War and Public Opinion in the Fifteenth and
Sixteenth Centuries' *Past and Present*, 22 July 1961

- Hartman C H : The Cavalier Spirit and its Influence on the Life and Work of Richard Lovelace
(Routledge, London 1925)
- Haste, Cate : Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War (Allen Lane, London 1977)
- Hemans, Felicia : The Poems of Felicia Hemans
(William Blackwood, London 1849)
- Henley W E : Poems: A Book of Verses: London Voluntaries
(David Nutt, London 1901)
- Homer : The Iliad
- Hooker E N (ed.) : The Works of John Dryden: Poems 1649-1680
v.1 (UC Press, Berkeley 1956)
- Hulme T E : Further Speculations ed. Sam Hynes
(University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln 1962)
- Johnston, John H : English Poetry of the First World War
(Princeton University Press, Princeton 1964)
- Jonin, Pierre (ed.) : La Chanson de Roland
(Galimard, Avignon 1979)
- Kernahan, Coulson : Six Famous Living Poets
(Thornton Butterworth, London 1922)
- Kipling, Rudyard : The Complete Barrack Room Ballads of Rudyard Kipling ed. Charles Carrington (Methuen, London 1974)
- Lawrence A W (ed.) : Letters to T E Lawrence (n.p.1962)
- Lawrence G A : Guy Livingstone (1857) reprinted in
Novels of High Society from the Victorian Age
ed. Anthony Powell (Pilot Press, London 1947)
- Lawrence T E : The Letters of T E Lawrence
ed. D Garnett (Jonathan Cape, London 1938)
- Lewis, Cecil Day : A Hope for Poetry (reprint)
(Blackwell, Oxford 1936)
- Macaulay, Thomas Babington : Essay on Addison ed. A R Weekes
(Juta, Cape Town n.d.)
- Makin, Peter : Provence and Pound (UC Press, Berkeley 1978)
- Malory, Thomas : Morte d'Arthur ed. Larry D Benson
(Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1977)
- : Works ed. Eugene Vinaver (OUP, London 1971)
- Maritain, Jacques : Art et Scholastique trans. J W Evans
as Art and Scholasticism
(Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1962)

- Markham, Gervase : Honour in His Perfection (London 1624)
(Gainesville Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints 1960)
- Marlowe, Christopher : Tamburlaine the Great
ed. Una Ellis-Fermor (Methuen, London 1931, repr. 1951)
- Marsh, Edward (ed.) : Georgian Poetry 1911-1912
(The Poetry Bookshop, London 1912)
- McArthur K M : The Collapse of the Heroic Tradition
in Twentieth Century War Poetry
(MA Dissertation, University of Cape Town 1979)
- McCrae, John : 'In Flanders Fields' in Gardner
- Moran, Lord : The Anatomy of Courage (London 1945)
- Morris, William : The Defence of Guinevere and other Poems
ed. Margaret A Lourie (Garland Publishing, New York 1981)
- Moynihan, Michael (ed.) : People at War 1914-1918
(David and Charles, Newton Abbot 1973)
- Nash, Paul : Outline: An Autobiography (Faber, London 1959)
- Newbolt, Sir Henry : Collected Poems 1897-1907
(Nelson and Sons, London 1907)
- Owen, Wilfred : The Collected Letters of Wilfred Owen
eds. Harold Owen and John Bell (London 1967)
- : The Collected Poems ed. C Day Lewis
(Chatto & Windus, London 1971)
- : The Poems of Wilfred Owen
(Chatto & Windus, London 1964)
- : Wilfred Owen: War Poems and Others
ed. Dominic Hibberd (London 1973)
- Pearson, Hesketh : Walter Scott (Methuen, London 1954)
- Pinto, Vivian de Sola : 'My First War: Memories of a Spectacled
Subaltern' in Promise of Greatness: The War of 1914-1918
(London 1968)
- Playne, Caroline E : Society at War 1914-1916
(George Allen & Unwin, London 1931)
- Pound, Ezra : Ezra Pound Perspectives: Essays in Honour of
his Eightieth Birthday ed. Noel Stock (Chicago 1965)
- : The Letters of Ezra Pound ed. D D Paige
(Faber, London 1951)
- : A Memoir of Gaudier-Brzeska
(New Directions, New York 1970)

- Press, John : Poets of World War I in
Writers and Their Work ed. Ian Scott-Kilvert
(Profile Books 1983)
- Richards, Frank : Old Soldiers Never Die
(Angus and Robertson, London 1933)
- Rieu E V (ed.) : Beowulf tr. Michael Alexander
(Penguin Classics, London 1973)
- Rothenstein, William : Men and Memories: The Recollections of William
Rothenstein 1920-1922 (Faber & Faber, London 1932)
- : Paul Nash 1889-1946 (British Painters Series:
Beaverbrook Newspapers Ltd., London 1961)
- Rutherford, Andrew : The Literature of War: Five Studies in Heroic
Virtue (Macmillan, London 1978)
- Sassoon, Siegfried : Collected Poems 1908-1956
(Faber and Faber, London 1961)
- : Siegfried Sassoon Diaries 1915-1918 ed. and introduced by
Rupert Hart-Davis (Faber and Faber, London 1983)
- Scott, Walter : The Works of Walter Scott
ed. J Logie Robertson (OUP, London 1913)
- : : The Poetical Works of Walter Scott
ed. J Logie Robertson (OUP 1913)
- Shakespeare, William : Coriolanus in Shakespeare:
The Complete Works (OUP London 1972)
- : King Henry IV : Part One ed. J H Walker
(Heinemann, London 1961)
- : The Life of Henry V ed. J H Walker
(Heinemann, London 1961)
- Shears F S : Froissart, Chronicler and Poet
(Routledge, London 1930)
- Silkin, Jon : Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War
(OUP London 1972)
- : (ed. and with introduction)
The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry
(Penguin, Harmondsworth 1979)
- Sorley, Charles Hamilton : The Letters of Charles Hamilton Sorley
(Cambridge University Press 1919)
- : Marlborough and Other Poems
(Cambridge UP, London 1932)
- Southey, Robert : Southey's Poetical Works
ed. M L H Fitzgerald (London 1909)

- Spear, Hilda D : Remembering, We Forget: A Background Study to the Poetry of the First World War
(Davis-Poynter, London 1979)
- Stallworthy, Jon : Wilfred Owen: a Biography (OUP London 1977)
- : (ed.) The Oxford Book of War Poetry (OUP, Oxford 1984)
- Stock, Noel : The Life of Ezra Pound
- Streets, John William : 'Youth's Consecration' in *The Poetry Review* July-August 1916 vol.7 no.4; ed. Galloway Kyle
(Erskine Macdonald, London)
- Swann T B : The Ungirt Runner: Charles Hamilton Sorley, Poet of World War I (Archon Books, London 1965)
- Swinburne, Algernon Charles : Mary Stuart (Chatto & Windus, London 1881)
- Taylor, Beverley and Brewer, Elizabeth : The Return of King Arthur: British and American Arthurian Literature since 1800
(D S Brewer, Cambridge 1983)
- Tennyson, Alfred (Lord) : The Works of Tennyson
ed. Hallam Tennyson (London n.p. 1910)
- Thorslev, Peter : The Byronic Hero
(U of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1962)
- Van Wyk Smith, Malvern : Drummer Hodge: The Poetry of the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902 (OUP, Oxford 1978)
- Whitelock, Dorothy (ed.) : Sweet's Anglo Saxon Reader (orig.1876)
(this ed. rev. Whitelock, OUP London 1967)
- Williams, Harry : Foreword to W H Vanstone's Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense (Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1977)
- Wordsworth, William : The Prelude Book X, ed. E de Selincourt
(Oxford 1959)
- : The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth
ed. John Morley (Macmillan, London 1903)
- : Poems of William Wordsworth VI ed. W Knight (London 1896)
- Wrenn C L (ed.) : Beowulf revised W F Bolton
(Harrap, London 1973)
- Yeats, William Butler : Introduction to The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935 (OUP London 1936)